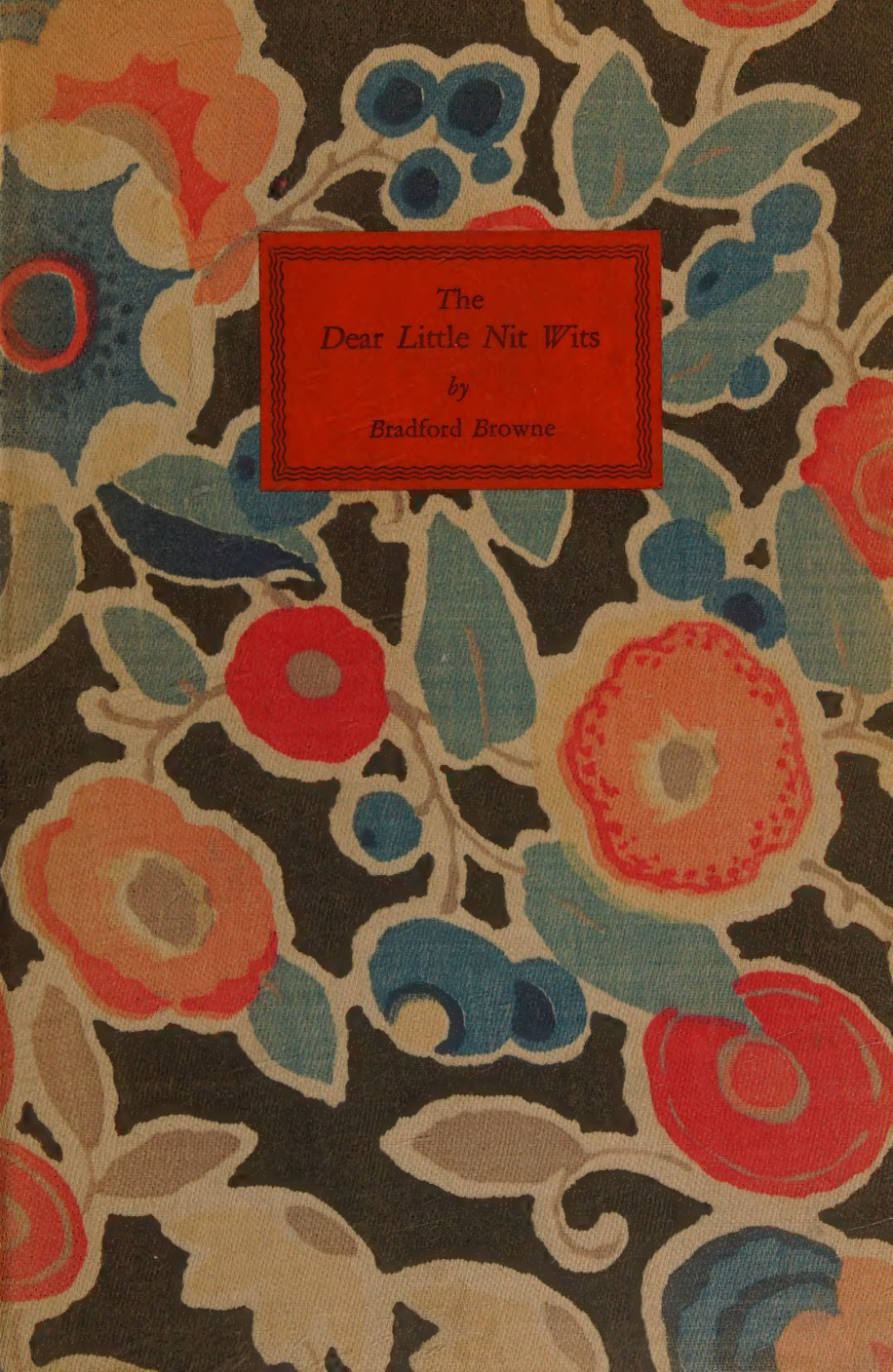
The
Dear Little Nit Wits
by
Bradford Browne

HAROLD STEIN PORTRAIT

The Dear Little Nit Wits

by

Bradford Browne

Walter J. Black, Inc. , , *Publisher*

New York

Copyright 1930 by Julius King

Printed in United States of America

791.4472
K733b

FOREWORD

This is the true story of The Dear Little Nit Wits, who cavort before the microphone of the Columbia Broadcasting System each week.

One nice thing about this book, it will be very easy to understand. For who is there among us who has none of the nit wit in him?

If you are enjoying the antics of The Dear Little Nit Wits over the air, and we hope you will in this volume, on the way out shake hands with Miss Georgia Backus, of the Columbia Broadcasting System, for it was she who originally prescribed a Nit Wit hour as a tonic for radio.

Well, let's get at the first chapter, which we find is entitled "Before the mast with Lindbergh: Or, Gabriel Horn talks back to the Lorelei."

THE DEAR LITTLE NIT WITS

CHAPTER I

IT WAS a warm December morning. The April sun was shining down upon a field of daisies. And, oh, yes, the zephyrs were wafting. The air was filled with a fragrance which emanated from the village tannery, and every few minutes the clock in the V and X was heard striking the hour.

As the morning breezes flitted across the meadows the buttercups and violets nodded first to the left and then to the right. Suddenly a little buttercup nodded to the right and exposed to view Lord Ashcart. Lord Percival Algernon Ashcart to be correct. This Dear Little Nit Wit, who forgot where he had left his panties to be pressed, was figuring out some deep, dark plot, but he was exposed * by the morning breeze. And right beside him, basking in the shelter of an anemone was dear little Patience Bumpstead, an interior desecrator. My, my, and there directly over Patience's head, in a crab apple tree, was reclining Madame Mocha de Polka, that sour singer of sweet songs, and a former member of the Russian Grand Opera Company of Butte, Montana. Several more breezes swept through this Elysian field and exposed the hiding places of all the other Dear Little Nit Wits, including Lizzie

* See picture and note how Lord Ashcart was exposed.

Twitch, the world's foremost authority on what to eat with a sun-burned back; and Aphrodite Godiva, the only living descendant of Lady Godiva, who proved to the world that a white horse was a thing of beauty. Of course we mustn't overlook Gabriel Horn, a small town boy, who still has faith in the old-fashioned telephone receiver.

The lowing of the kine on yonder hill attracted the attention of these Dear Little Nit Wits and there bouncing over the field of buttercups, daisies and ant hills came Professor Exczema Succotash with a harpsichord suspended from her shoulders. Closely behind her was another Professor, Professor R. U. Musclebound, with his sinews bulging in the cool morning air. It always took a cool morning to make the Professor's sinews bulge.

As the Dear Little Nit Wits gathered together, Lord Ashcart suggested that they should sing, and that their song should be a token of appreciation to the wild flowers of the meadows, whose sweet fragrance had helped to make our subways inhabitable.

So, having nothing else to do, they waited for the signal from Lord Ashcart. It was not long in forthcoming, and soon the hills and valleys were ringing with a melody that sounded strangely like,"YES,WE HAVE NO BANANAS. WE HAVE NO BANA . . ."

As the last note, or perhaps it was the next to the last note, was dying out behind the handball court on the Island of Pizzicatto, for all this really took place on the Island of Pizzicatto, one of the Dear Little Nit Wits, and I believe it was Mocha de Polka, (we found out a few months

later that it was Aphrodite Godiva) rose and with a loud voice exclaimed:

"What do human beings eat when they are hungry?"

"Food," cried the other Little Nit Wits in quick succession, for they guessed immediately what the right answer was.

"Right," bellowed Mocha de Polka (for we later found out that it really was she after all).

Then Professor Musclebound, who could always think up the wrong thing to say at the right time, with a heave of his chest, shouted:

"There is but one of us who is qualified to speak on the subject of food. Let her come forward."

"Huzzah and a tiger," howled the Dear Little Nit Wits. "Lizzie Twitch, Lizzie Twitch, rah, rah, rah. Lizzie Twitch, Lizzie Twitch, rah, rah, rah. Gas stove, oil stove, omelets and hash. Marmalade, lemonade, parenthesis and dash. Lizzie Twitch, Lizzie Twitch, food . . . food . . . food."

"Thank you so much, my dear little companions," gurgled Miss Lizzie, as she adjusted her field glasses and turned off the fan. "What is so rare as a day in June?" she continued, by arrangement with the Philadelphia *Enquirer*.

"A medium steak," whined Patience Bumpstead, who just discovered that she had her shoes on the wrong feet.

"Thank you so much," responded Miss Twitch, as she settled herself comfortably by the fireplug and lighted another cheroot. "Now, my Dear Little Nit Wits, I have a most important message for you today, and I must ask that

you give me your complete and divided attention. During the past week I have been studying the stars, studying them with a view to determining just what effect Saturn and Mars would have on apple strudel. Well, the results of my investigation were so adverse that I decided to postpone my talk on apple strudel until the stars were in ascension, whatever that means.

"Now, this morning I want to talk to you about my recipe for puree of telephone directory. This is a very simple recipe and you will enjoy serving this soup to your most beloved enemies. Now, I'm going to ask you, Dear Little Nit Wits, to write down what I'm going to tell you. And to make the recipe just a little more intimate, I would suggest that you write it down on your husband's stiff front shirt with a six-inch paint brush dipped in lavender kalsomine. If you're ready, we'll proceed."

"And a Merry Christmas to you, too, Miss Twitch," was the way the Dear Little Nit Wits invited Miss Lizzie to carry on.

"Thank you so much," smirked Miss Twitch, as she toed the mark, anticipating another victory. "First, get a brand-new telephone directory, a large one preferably, one listing subscribers in Chicago, Pittsburgh, or even little old New York. Hurriedly run through the pages, tearing out those pages relating to the Smiths, Browns, Jones, Cohens and the Dermaguzzledorfs. The next operation calls for boiling the telephone directory for three hours in luke warm dish water, after which you might add a little grated charcoal for seasoning. When the directory has become limp from boil-

ing, and you can determine the proper limpness by prodding the directory with a peacock feather, (a blue one) you should remove it from the water and place on your ironing board.

"Next, you will require a head of lettuce. Separate the leaves of the lettuce, smearing over each leaf a mixture of peanut butter and a few flakes of Bull Durham tobacco. Then insert a lettuce leaf between every twenty pages of the telephone directory, care being taken to see that the lettuce is placed on pages with even numbers only. This is *most* important.

"When this has been done, trim off the edges of lettuce which might be protruding, and wrap the directory in an old red flannel shirt. In order that the whole directory may be permeated with the flavor of the peanut butter, I suggest that you place the directory in the ice box to cool for several weeks. When supper is ready and you wish to serve the puree of telephone directory, carefully remove the directory from the ice box and toss it into the waste basket. Now, I do hope that you will enjoy this puree of telephone directory. That's all, my Dear Little Nit Wits. But before I leave you may I remind you of our club slogan, 'Ashes to ashes and dust to dust. To enjoy my puree, just dunk a crust.' Thank you so much."

Of course after such a remarkable talk the Dear Little Nit Wits no longer felt the pangs of hunger, and they rose as one man and cheered and cheered and cheered, jarring the sculptured characters right off the side of Stone Moun-

tain, for by this time the Dear Little Nit Wits were on their way to Palm Beach.

* * * * *

(If you think you can stand it, we ask that you continue on, dear reader, to the next chapter which is entitled, "Sunday with the bears at Yellowstone Park: Or, Aphrodite Godiva finances another polar expedition.")

CHAPTER II

FOR three weeks Lord Ashcart had tried to sing "I faw down and go boom" to the tune of "Ramona." Finally, when we all thought that he had succeeded, we discovered that he had been singing the tune of "Mary, Mary, won't you get up." Disgusted, Lord Ashcart laid down his lute and turned to help Madame Mocha de Polka split an infinitive. This didn't take very long, as Lord Ashcart was the champion infinitive splitter of Colgate, Williams, and one or two other colleges where the football players always passed their exams by a close shave. This particular infinitive was finally split into twelve one-inch adverbs and numerous prepositions.

Lord Ashcart, who always took such pride in his infinitive splitting, really gloated over his latest master-stroke. His head began to swell, and Lizzie Twitch, ever alert, put her finger in the hole in the dike just in time to stop a flood of protests about to be directed at him.

"What was the name of Paul Revere's horse?" asked Lizzie, forcing the conversation, at the same time altering the number of her license plate.

"I refuse to answer on advice of counsel," was Lord Ashcart's snappy comeback. "But, gather about me, my Dear Little Nit Wits, and I'll show you my fondest secret."

"At last Lord Ashcart is goin' to show us his love letters," insinuated Gabriel Horn, slipping an ace of spades into his shoe top.

"No, no, and a thousand noes," whispered Lord Ashcart. "I'm going to show you my collection of punctuation marks."

"Pooh, pooh," sneered Professor R. U. Musclebound, who even yet won't believe that Colonel Lindbergh wrote "Lover come back to me."

These taunts from the Professor had no more effect on Lord Ashcart than if he had been presented with triplets by his wife, and of course he had no wife.

But, being a true English gentleman (I do wish he would remember where he left his trousers) proceeded immediately to establish himself in the hearts of the St. Louis Cardinals, who were about to open a four weeks' series with the Boys of '76 in the Holland Tunnel. So, he produced from under his vest (thank Heaven he didn't mislay his vest) a little box, about three feet square.

The Little Nit Wits stood around with their eyes shut and their mouths open, wondering what Lord Ashcart meant by his collection of punctuation marks. Professor Exczema Succotash, who was right on the job while Lord Ashcart was trying to find the key that would open the box, instructed the United States Aquamarine Band to strike up a tune. And so, in just a few moments the air was filled with the strains of the lovely Swiss S O S song, "'Alp, 'Alp."

A few minutes later, everything being in readiness, Lord

Ashcart unlocked the treasured chest, as the band played "Chest a song at twilight."

"First, I want to show you this," moaned our English hero, holding something aloft in his hand.

"Why, that's an ink spot," cheered Patience Bumpstead, avoiding the glare of the District Attorney.

"Ah! what an unsympathetic soul you are, Patience. That is a period," hedged Lord Ashcart.

"Probably one of them Renaissance periods, whatever they be," inserted Gabriel Horn, dropping his cigar ashes on the new Chinese rug.

"No, no, this is the last period of the Magna Charta," prophesied Lord Ashcart, as he stopped to cut another piece of cake, his sixth since two o'clock, eastern daylight saving time.

"It looks more like a speck of dirt I got in my eye, riding on the Baltimore and Ohio," sneered Lizzie Twitch, kissing Wallace Beery's photograph. "But what under heavens is that thing, there?"

"Don't call it a thing," said Lord Ashcart, wig-wagging to the scout leader on shore to send him two cans of beans, two loaves of bread and a couple of anchovies. "It cost me five thousand pounds," he continued.

"Pounds of what?" giggled Mocha de Polka, not wishing to appear too interested.

"Pounds sterling," shot back our pantless hero. "That is a comma."

"A comma?" echoed the Dear Little Nit Wits.

"Yes, (or perhaps he said 'aye,' I've just forgotten for the

moment) a comma, and it was taken from the first and only speech ever made by the Sphinx," was Lord Ashcart's way of proposing to the dashing young widow.

Lizzie Twitch and Patience Bumpstead, who were trying to make a symphonic arrangement of "Blue Bells of Scotland," looked up from their knitting and in unison spoke as follows, to-wit:

"Say, what is this Lord Ashcart? What are you trying to do, spoof us?"

"No, no, and two thousand noes. And look, look at this?" he inveigled all out of breath.

"I'm looking," I interrupted, not wanting to be left out of the story entirely. "What is that funny looking thing?"

And Lord Ashcart replied gleefully, "A hyphen! A hyphen!" (Now, perhaps I should have omitted the "h" and used an apostrophe, seeing as how Lord Ashcart was supposed to be English).

Patience Bumpstead, who really had never seen a hyphen before, passed the butter to Aphrodite Godiva and remarked:

"Where did you get that hyphen, Lord Ashcart? I want the truth, the whole truth and nothing but."

And Lord Ashcart's reply was sharp and to the point:

"That is the original hyphen that Lord Billington-Buckingham used in his name. When he changed it for a later model, he gave it to me."

The Dear Little Nit Wits couldn't contain themselves longer, so each one took another tug at his or her belt and cried out with a loud voice:

"Wonderful! Stupendous!" and murmured several other words they couldn't pronounce.

Aphrodite Godiva, who all this time was painting wise cracks on her horse's back, became sufficiently interested to inquire:

"And pray, tell me what's dat queer lookin' gadget," pointing to what looked like a period that had run over.

"An apostrophe, my dear little friends," answered Lord Ashcart, at the same time, executing a perfect forward pass for a gain of three hundred yards. "Some years ago the House of Parliament in London passed a bill prohibiting the use of the word, 'ain't.' England having no further need for that apostrophe, sold it to me for several thousands of shillings, and I believe a tuppence or two."

At this point, Lord Ashcart, sensing a chilly response to his exhibition, and desiring to check up a bit, asked the Dear Little Nit Wits what they thought of his collection of punctuation marks. And the answer was not slow in arriving.

"YES, WE HAVE NO BANANAS. WE HAVE NO BANA . . ."

"Very good," said Ashcart. "Not a dissenting vote." And he continued, "Now, here is something of which I am most proud," holding aloft an object that looked quite like a star.

"Why, that's a star," snickered Professor Musclebound, calling off the blood hounds.

"It is quite similar to a star, but this is called an asterisk,"

wailed Lord Ashcart, who hoped to be mistaken for the Prince of Wails.

"But where did it come from?" complained Patience Bumpstead, growing weaker and weaker every seven days.

"Let me explain," proposed the Englishman gentleman. "Of course you recall the surrender of Lord Cornwallis to General Washington? Well, history does not mention just what Lord Cornwallis said to the General when he passed him his sword. But, if his words had been written they would have been deleted by the censor, and that very asterisk would have been used in their stead. A very valuable addition to my collection."

Professor Musclebound, who never did get more than an "E" in arithmetic in kindergarten, thought he had Lord Ashcart confounded as he pointed to another exhibit in the collection.

"Now, smarty, give us the low down on that baby, there," he directed.

"Sh! Not so loud, Professor," screamed Lord Ashcart. "Not so loud. Come close to me, my friends, and I'll divulge the secret of that letter 'h'." For it really was a letter "h".

"He's going to divulge the secret of that letter 'h'," chiselled all the Dear Little Nit Wits in succession, with the exception of Gabriel Horn, and he was trying to get London on a one tube set.

"Some years ago," began Lord Ashcart, "an English gentleman accidentally dropped an 'h', and for years and years all England has been looking for it."

"Well, what of it?" boomed the Nit Wits.

"That's the very 'h' he dropped," wheezed Lord Ashcart, "and if it were known that I had it in my possession, I would be put in irons for life."

With that the Dear Little Nit Wits dropped off to sleep, just as Lord Ashcart was about to explain the anthology of the umlaut which he also had in his collection. Unfortunately he dropped the west half of the umlaut on the ground and it rolled away. In vain he searched for it, looking hither and yon, mostly yon, and before he knew it he had crossed the Andes Mountains, without so much as a quiet ham sandwich in his knapsack. The Dear Little Nit Wits were awakened by Lord Ashcart's absence, and just as the morning sun was streaking the eastern horizon, they all got aboard the stage coach. For hours and hours they drove on, not knowing whither they went, cognizant only of the fact that Sheridan was twenty miles away, and all the time they wanted to go to Elmira. Here and there a meadow lark or a ground hog or a filet of sole would raise its head to wish them bon voyage, and the Dear Little Nit Wits responded as only the Dear Little Nit Wits could by singing:

"YES, WE HAVE NO BANANAS. WE HAVE NO BANAN . . ."

And as their voices faded like a new shirt fades the first time it goes to the laundry, they carried on until their compass read, "Longitude, 45, lassitude, 6¾."

* * * * *

(Hope springs eternal in the human breast, and just around the corner there may be sunshine for you, gentle reader. So, put on your armor and pull yourselves together and carry on to the next page, where you will find the story of "Lizzie Twitch admonishes the vox populi: Or, What to give your son on his hundredth birthday.")

CHAPTER III

NO ONE knew better than Queen Lallapaloosa that one couldn't play the ukulele with boxing gloves on. Had it been tried? Well, let's not waste our time, but take the Queen's word for it that it couldn't be done. Maybe you never heard of the Queen? What, never heard of Queen Lallapaloosa and her troupe of Royal Hawaiians? My, my, didn't you know that Queen Lallapaloosa had broken all flag pole sitting records? Didn't you know that she was the first woman to ever sit on the south pole? In fact, it was while seated on the south pole that the Queen got the idea for those little one-legged paper panties that come on broiled lamb chops.

"That's a lot of fish feathers," grammaticized Aphrodite Godiva, sharpening her automatic pencil.

"What's that?" said I, resentfully forcing myself into the story.

"Who was that?" interrogated Aphrodite, looking every member of Congress squarely in the eye.

"It must have been the budding young author himself," vouchsafed Lizzie Twitch, trying to curry favor with the stableboy.

"Oh, is that Mr. Browne? Nice day ain't it, Mr. Browne?"

saying which Madame Mocha de Polka ran up the gangplank and threw a kiss to the Admiral of the Pacific Squadron.

"Say, what right's he got to butt into dis affair?" was the next question Aphrodite hurled at her companions.

"Look here, Aphrodite," I put in again, "watch your step or I'll take you right out of the story. See if I don't."

"Better be careful, Aphrodite," suggested Gabriel Horn, as he inhaled and exhaled without taking off his moustache.

"Yes, have a care," agreed Professor Succotash.

"Oh, have a sweet," said I, offering Aphrodite the whole box. And this finally restored peace in the ranks of the Dear Little Nit Wits, again proving the old adage, "When in trouble, be nonchalant—reach for a sweet."

Peace was restored in the ranks, but not for long, however, as Patience Bumpstead was moving uneasily in her nest. Something was on her mind. What could it be? It never happened before. Lord Ashcart was the first to realize that something was amiss and turning to Patience he simmered:

"Patience, dear, take my arm and let me escort you into the inaugural ball."

"I have work to do, Lord Ashcart," was the ready retort of Patience, who cared no more for a retort than the average chemist. "The world is waiting to know how a music room should be desecrated and I have the right answer."

"Pour it out," gurgled Mocha de Polka, not realizing that the bank was closed.

And this was Patience's cue to talk on her favorite sub-

ject—interior desecration. All the Dear Little Nit Wits eagerly awaited the pearls of wisdom which were to drop from Patience's lips, and they were not disappointed.

"Good evening, my lovers of beautiful homes," began Patience, throwing the throttle wide open as the train got under way. "Tonight I want to give you a few suggestions, which if followed will bring you much happiness and make your homes something more than a place to deliver mail and ice to, and carry mortgages on. Let us discuss first the music room. Many people coming to your homes never would recognize your music room if they didn't see a bass violin standing in the corner or a piccolo hanging on the wall. So, I want to give you my idea of how a music room should be desecrated.

"First, I suggest that you do away with the music cabinet entirely, and tack your music on the walls and ceiling. Think how much simpler this method is, when you consider looking through a big music cabinet for a certain piece, like 'Ben Hur's Chariot Race' or 'The Baggage Coach Ahead.' My, all you've got to do is look for it on the wall. Of course you may have to move your piano around the room, depending on the location of the music on the wall or the ceiling. So, I suggest that you rent a large St. Bernard dog that could be hitched up to the piano. He could draw it around the music room wherever you wanted it.

"For tacking up the music you will have to have a ladder. Well, my lovers of beautiful homes, if you have no ladder I'm sure that your local fire department will be glad to come up some Sunday and help you out. If the fire department ob-

jects, you might start a fire in your attic, a small one of course, and then the firemen can't very well refuse to visit you.

"I'm sure you'll find that my suggestions will actually beautify your music room. Can't you picture 'Sweet Adeline' and 'Old Black Joe' hanging side by side over the 'Swanee River?' Or, 'Darling Nellie Gray' nailed to the ceiling directly over grandfather's cuspidor? And, speaking of grandfather, I must tell you that I got this wonderful idea of putting the music on the walls from him. But, I must warn you not to make the same mistake that grandfather did. He loved 'Pop goes the weasel,' and he loved to play it on his bass drum, but he never could remember the notes. Unfortunately, he tacked the music for 'Pop goes the weasel' in the northeast corner of the ceiling. And, so, whenever he wanted to play it he had to climb way up to the top of his stepladder, dragging his bass drum up with him. One night he hit the note where the 'pop' comes in a little too hard, breaking the head of his drum. The shock knocked him off the stepladder, and to this day grandfather hasn't been able to tell the difference between an irregular verb and a decimal fraction.

"And, oh yes, I must tell you about grandmother. Dear old Granny loved the 'Prisoner's Song' but unluckily they tacked this song just above the mopboard, and whenever Grandmother wanted to sing it, she had to lie on her stomach on the floor, and you know poor dear Grandmother suffered terribly from nostalgia, too.

"Now, I must leave you, my dear lovers of beautiful homes, and I do hope that I've done you good."

"And how," were the first words the Dear Little Nit Wits could utter as they came out from under the ether. There was no denying the fact, Patience sure did know her stuff. Immediately upon finishing her address, she was overwhelmed with an avalanche of telephone calls from the Board of Directors of the Standard Oil Company of Heligoland. Guess what? They wanted her to write an endorsement for Marion steam shovels, promising to put her picture on every steam shovel made. But, Patience couldn't be bothered and when the Dear Little Nit Wits learned of her decision, they all mounted their pogo sticks and looking off to the West, they made the welkin ring as they sang:

"YES, WE HAVE NO BANANAS. WE HAVE NO BAN . . ."

And as the last couple of dozen notes were resounding through the Grand Canyon, the Dear Little Nit Wits, so tired they could hardly hold their eyes open longer, plunged into the icy water not a second too soon. They had gotten their man! For the Dear Little Nit Wits for weeks had been on the trail of Dangerous Dan McGrew.

* * * * *

(Well, well, well. Another chapter finished without a casualty. Try hard, gentile reader, to carry on and you will be surprised, for in the next chapter you will learn all about "Father's Day in Guam: Or, the Dear Little Nit Wits and the Chimney Sweep.")

CHAPTER IV

IT HAD been a real cold day, and Madame Mocha de Polka had taken her life in her lap and gone out to the barn to kiss the cattle goodnight. Mocha was like that, always doing something for dumb animals, having once received a medal from the S. P. C. A. It's all right to kiss the cattle goodnight, but it does seem to us that Mocha might have used her time to better advantage, considering that she was way behind in her pocketpicking. You see, Mocha had won many a championship back in Junction City, Kansas, for pocketpicking. Mocha's alibi was that pockets weren't ripe enough for picking just then, and anyway she had no ladder to reach those pockets that grew on the tops of the trees. In addition, she had plenty of pants pockets, and all too few vest pockets. Confidentially, at the time she was experimenting with a new type of pocket known as an air pocket. There was getting to be a bigger demand for air pockets every day and the supply was very limited. Very limited. Mocha even went so far as to try to convert coal pockets into air pockets, but before she got through with her experiment she had to call in the Mayo Brothers who diagnosed the case as painful dandruff.

But we are digressing. After Mocha had returned from caressing the kine, she busied herself with her jewelry.

Mocha had the finest collection of jewelry seen outside of Tiffany's. She had diamonds, rubies, emeralds, opals, onyx, quartz, pints, gallons, to say nothing of a miniature safe, a replica of that of the Chicago, Milwaukee & St. Paul railroad system.

"Ding, dong, ding," sang out the evening chimes, which were located in Greta Garbo's cellar.

"The chimes are pealing. They must be sunburned," said Mocha, catching a baseball tossed from the top of the Washington Monument.

"Oh, be yourself and see how you like it," put in Professor R. U. Musclebound, raising the flag to half mast, out of courtesy to the Dead Sea.

"I don't like to have you talk to me like that, Professor. You act like you had just been blackballed by the Larkin Club. And, besides, there's a letter for you in the flour barrel." Saying which, Madame Mocha de Polka rose to her six feet, twelve inches, executed a perfect right oblique, and to the strains of "Marry? You're a little bit old fashioned," she marched straight to Chicago.

For a few hours Professor Musclebound stood as if rivetted to the spot. In fact he wasn't rivetted, he was cemented, for he had been standing on a new concrete sidewalk just laid that morning. Finally he remembered what Mocha had said about a letter, and he hurried into the house (I don't know how he got loose from the cement, but you can work that one out any way you like). He ran to the flour barrel, put in his hand and pulled out a long envelope. It was from our own dear Government, and it

had no postage stamp * on it. The dear Professor almost wept, for he had been hoping for years that the Government, his own Government would recognize him. He could hardly believe his eyes, but there it was, addressed to him, and he read slowly but deliberately:

"Professor R. U. Musclebound, Care of Rip Van Winkle, Weepy Swallow, New York."

"Why don't you read your letter?" inquired Patience Bumpstead, who couldn't remember whether the recipe called for two tons of coal and one yeast cake, or vice versa.

"This is a Governmental communication addressed to me, and I shall peruse its contents at my leisure," was the way Musclebound had of telling the barmaid to set 'em up again. In a trice he was outside of the house, on his way to a telephone booth, where he could find the privacy that his position now demanded. Arriving at the telephone booth, he found it occupied by a special meeting of the Smith Brothers and the Old Gold cigarette people. They were debating the question of how to eliminate even more coughs from their products. The Smith Brothers were for dropping the matter, but the Old Gold cigarette people couldn't see it without taking off their blindfolds. Well, the telephone booth was so crowded they couldn't make up their minds, and they adjourned to the Holland Tunnel. This gave Professor Musclebound his opportunity and he hurried into the telephone booth, taking care to lock the door behind him, and pulling down the shades.

* Your Congressman will gladly explain how this is done.

Eagerly the Professor drew forth from beneath his celluloid collar the letter he had received from the Government, and he opened it with trembling hands. And this is what the letter contained.

"Under separate cover we are sending you a collection of seeds which will come to you through the courtesy of your esteemed Congressman. It has been the custom in the past to permit constituents to choose the variety of seeds they preferred. But this year, through an Act of Congress (probably Act II, scene IV), the method will be a trifle different. The Departure from Agriculture, designated by Congress as the proper Governmental agency to distribute seeds, will send you ten envelopes containing seeds of ten varieties of flowers and vegetables. You are advised that the labels on the outside of the envelopes will not correspond to the kinds of seeds contained therein. The reason for this is plain."

"Great Caesar's ghost, it had better be plain," sizzled Musclebound to himself, pushing a hat pin through the keyhole of the telephone booth. And he read on:

"The country has been going through a rather dismal and distressing period, what with the inheritance taxes and the poor showing of the Brooklyn Robins, and so Congress has hit upon this method to make the country laugh and be merry. For instance, you will receive an envelope labelled 'nasturtiums.' Probably the seeds will be those of milkweed, but you won't discover this until the little seeds have poked their little heads up through the soil. Can't you picture what a lovely time you will have if you plant

seeds in your flower box which you thought were parsley, and then up came a giant oak tree which pushed the roof of your house way up into the sky? What a jolly time the American people are going to have this spring.

"As an added example of what Congress is trying to do for its constituents, it has arranged for the importation, at tremendous expense, of vast quantities of Siberian flumph seeds. This is a little seed which comes from the sweet lemon tree of Manchuria. These seeds should be planted in platinum dust around half-past two in the morning, sprinkled with a solution of iodine at 8 a. m., and they will start to sprout at noon. By three in the afternoon the plant will be completely covered with buds, and by four the buds will burst and out will come three different sizes of flumph lined bed room slippers, which will make ideal Christmas gifts.

"Congress will be particularly interested to know what luck you have with the Siberian flumph seeds and if you will write to Congress outlining the results obtained, you will be sent free of charge, a chart showing the location of all the lighthouses on Lake Chuubungagungamaug, in Massachusetts, for the fiscal year ending June 30, 1835."

Professor Musclebound affectionately folded the letter to his heaving bosom and sighed deeply. What a distinction to have his own Government so honor him! Of course he would plant the seeds and particularly the Siberian flumph seeds. Had he not been worrying about what he should give Mocha and Patience and Lizzie for Christmas? And was not the solution to this problem here in this letter?

With a hop, skip and a jump, to say nothing of a standing, sitting, standing dive, he rushed back to the Dear Little Nit Wits just in time to see them getting their diplomas from the War College. For days and days and weeks and weeks he sought out the rural free delivery postman, in the hope that the seeds would arrive, but alas and alack, each time he inquired he got the same answer. And of course you must know by now what the answer was. No? Well, do let us inform you.

"YES, WE HAVE NO BANANAS. WE HAVE NO BA . . ."

* * * * *

(Oh, Gwendolyn, bring your stenographer's notebook. Yes, the red one. I want to dictate a letter to the Chief of Police. No, I have a better idea. Sit down and let me read to you the story of how "The Dear Little Nit Wits double-cross the shepherd: Or, Exczema Succotash lapses her insurance.")

CHAPTER V

NO ONE seemed to be paying much attention to the infant prodigy, sawing away on his violin. It should have been an occasion for rejoicing, but with eggs selling at a new high level, how could one concentrate on concertos, rallentandos, and allegrettos, particularly rallentandos. It was just such a night as one might expect to precede father's day in Siam. The Dear Little Nit Wits were getting restless. They looked at each other and winked, and just as the infant prodigy was about to tear into the "Memphis Blues," who should come riding down the center aisle of Town Hall but Aprophite Godiva, mounted on an aquaplane, drawn by an Eskimo dog team.

The audience rose as one man, for there was only one man there, the janitor I believe or a music critic, and cheered until he cracked his plaster cast, for he had broken his leg back in the Crimean War.

Aphrodite Godiva maintained her poise and mounted the stage. All eyes were upon her. Like the lady that she was supposed to be, she entered right center, stopping at the table to quench her thirst, as she had been bothered with the hiccoughs off and on, mostly on, since a week come Michelmas Day. Gaining the footlights on an off tackle play, she

raised her hand to quell the deafening applause. She opened her lips to speak and the following words fell out:

"Before beginnin' my big speech, I wanna ask de stenographers sittin' in de secon' balcony to please refrain from t'rowin' dere typewriters down into de orchestry. Dere are two reasons fer askin' dis of you'se, but I'll only mention one of 'em. It ain't bein' done dis year."

"How about monkey wrenches?" inquired the representative of the Plumbers Union, Local 16½, who was seated in seat B4, before they moved him back to H20.

"Only monkeys'd t'row wrenches," was Aphrodite's historical comeback, and then all was quiet again.

"Now is your chance, Aphrodite. Tell 'em about Lady Godiva's ride in the one horse shay," I whispered in her ear.

"You keep out of dis," angrily tossed Aphrodite, "you're jes de buddin' young author, an' you ain't goin' to steal no spot light from me."

Anyway my suggestion had the desired effect, because Aphrodite immediately signalled the orchestra leader to play her favorite selection, the "Poet and Unpleasant Overture."

During the overture Aphrodite was wasting no time in getting the stage set for her own act. The trained seals were put in their places, the trapeze and the flying rings were adjusted and as the orchestra was hanging on to the last note, Aphrodite appeared in the center of a huge spot light, mounted on a beautiful white horse. She was wearing a blond wig and a smile that would make you think Joe Cook was crying. And that was all! Every eye in the vast audi-

ence was aimed at the beautiful white horse, but being a horse of another color, it didn't bat a hoof.

As soon as the applause, and there wasn't any, had died down, Aphrodite Godiva began her memorable address, which concerned the true story of the historical ride of Lady Godiva, who, by the way, was Aphrodite's maiden aunt, once removed but twice recalled. This is a verbatim account of Aphrodite's address as published in the last annual bulletin of the Bureau of Internal Revenue.

"Ladies and gents. In de year of de California Gold Rush I was jes' a little gal, makin' mud pies in Schenec—Schenec—Schenec ——," began Aphrodite, trying to get rid of a bread crumb which had become lodged in her wig.

"Maybe it was Troy," offered one of the ushers, who was holding the prompt copy in the wings.

"I was makin' mud pies in Rochester," continued Aphrodite, paying no more attention to the suggestion than if it had been made by Lee Schubert. "One day me old lady got a wireless message from her grandmother, who by de way was de original Lady Godiva. Dis message begged me old lady to lend her a couple of bucks er somethin' to buy a new dress, 'cause me grandmother was goin' to ride in a parade or somethin' in Charleston, Sout' Carolina. De old gent was out of woik at de time, an' things was pretty bad at de house, what wid me an' de other twenty-eight kids tryin' to keep our fur coats in repair an' eat regular. So, Ma, dat's me old lady, wrote me aunt who was de original Lady Godiva, that . . ."

"Just a moment, Aphrodite," I corrected, "you said it was your grandmother, now you call her your aunt."

"Dat's right," said Aphrodite, rambling on and apparently ignoring my suggestion. "So, Ma took her pen in hand and wrote Lady Godiva dat she was out o' luck, an' Lady Godiva took her pen in hand an' wrote right back an' said dat jes' fer dat she wouldn't wear nothin'. Well, we didn't care much, as we was havin' a hard job keepin' de wolves out of de cellar, an' believe me or not, or call me a li . . ."

"A prevaricator, perhaps?" yelled a bald headed man in the second row, who was wearing blinders at his wife's behest.

"Or call me a liar, but she done it," went on Aphrodite.

"Done what?" asked the entire audience rising to it's feet and singing the fourteenth stanza of "Boola Boola."

"She rode wid nothin' on. An' she rode a white horse. Of course she was a big hit, 'cause most of de men hadn't seen a woman wearin' a blond wig fer over twenty years. An' would you believe it jes' den everythin' got rosy fer de whole fambly. Godiva got rich, 'cause all de leather manerfacterers got togedder an' named a new leather after her."

"No!" said the audience.

"Sure. Undressed kid," was Aphrodite's lucid explanation.

Then the orchestra played a march, and the audience chose its exits, everybody going out thru the back door, which was locked. That is, everybody but the Dear Little Nit Wits. They waited patiently for Aphrodite Godiva to

take her stage clothes off and join them in a rubber of "Bean Porridge Hot, Bean Porridge Cold."

It was nearly three o'clock in the morning when Aphrodite finally appeared, only to find the Dear Little Nit Wits missing. She was about to sit down and have a good cry, in seat K9, a doggy thing to do at a time like that, when lo and behold, there hanging to the massive chandelier away over her head, Aphrodite sighted the Dear Little Nit Wits, playing put and take. Professor Succotash was the first to catch her eye and soon the mammoth theater was resounding with a sound that sounded strangely like "YES, WE HAVE NO BANANAS. WE HAVE NO BANA . . ."

The janitor turned the key in the lock, and as the night watchman sleepily made his rounds, Gabriel Horn stole his lantern and led the Dear Little Nit Wits over into Hoboken, where the Aquitania was taking on a load of stenographer's note books for delivery in Albany.

* * * * *

(Are you still there, gentle reader? Do keep on, for really you have nothing to fear. That is, nothing compared to Daniel in the lion's den. So, turn quietly, yet deliberately, over to the next page, where you will find the true story of "Lizzie Twitch finds herself: Or, the wedding of the emu and the ai.")

CHAPTER VI

IT WAS about half-past three in the morning when Patience Bumpstead poked her little head out of the tent to see if it were raining. And of course it was. It always rains when one has planned a trip to the dentist's or the taxidermist's.

"Come quickly," invited Patience, as she noticed that the rain was wet. And, in response to her invitation hurried Madame Mocha de Polka, dressed in her little Lord Fauntleroy suit, with rubber boots and carrying a spear. She always carried a spear with her when she went blueberrying. And, today Mocha was accepting an invitation from the Congressional Committee on Apiculture to come to Washington and pick blueberries off the Capitol steps. She looked so sweet.

"Jupe Pluvius has double crossed us again," murmured Patience, pressing the button which officially opened the jack pot.

"Giggle, giggle, giggle," responded Mocha, "and I mean it too."

"But why didn't the Weather Brewery of the United States Departure from Agriculture warn us it was going to rain?" inquired Patience, drying herself with a towel marked "Statler Hotels."

"It did," put in Mocha. "Lord Ashcart found the weather forecast yesterday. He was searching among some old papers, looking for Captain Kidd's last will and testament, but he found the weather forecast instead."

"How disgusting," interjected Miss Bumpstead, permitting her innermost feelings to become apparent, which really didn't become her at all. "But where is Lord Ashcart with the forecast now?"

Mocha, not caring to pursue the conversation further, as she hadn't practised her ukulele lesson for three weeks, turned to Patience and gasped:

"Am I my brother's keeper?"

This remark coming from Mocha completely floored Patience and she immediately went into her dance.

But Lord Ashcart, being related to royalty (we believe he once had a dog named "Prince"), surprised Mocha and Patience by appearing in the doorway of their tent. He was dressed in a Chinese kimono, covered with little cabbages and turnips which raced each other up and down the sleeves. He was the first to clear his throat and speak. This is what he said:

"For New York City, New Orleans, Nome, and points east, west, south and north, the weather forecast states that there will be rain, followed by sunshine, then a little more rain, a little more sunshine, then rain, then sunshine, then rain, then . . ."

The Dear Little Nit Wits couldn't resist longer and they shouted to the cadence of Chopin's Funeral March:

"Rain, sunshine, rain, sunshine, rain, sun . . ."

"Hold," shouted Professor Musclebound, and the Dear Little Nit Wits took their seats, waiting for Lord Ashcart to read the next funny on the comic page.

"For Eastport, Maine, and Buffalo, New York, the weather forecast states that there will be light variable winds, varying from light blue to a pale pink, or maybe it was a couple of other fellows. For the Bunker Hill Monument in Charleston, Massachusetts, and the Reno Divorce Court, there will be slight rains followed by the surviving members of the 19th Regiment, the Atlanta Baseball Team and the original Floradora Sextette. For the rest of the country there will probably be either fair weather, cloudy weather, sunshine, rain, snow, tornadoes, measles, mumps, pyorrhea, hurricanes, bamboo canes, sugar canes, potatoes, tomatoes and a few sprigs of chives for flavoring. The Weather Brewery reports that it has on hand twelve different brands of weather which it will send you on receipt of twenty-five cents for twenty-five weeks, or if you prefer, lead your ace and see what happens. And this concludes the reading of the weather forecast from the United States Departure from Agriculture," howled Lord Ashcart, making himself at home under the piano.

"I move that we accept the weather forecast as read," reminisced Professor R. U. Musclebound, without knowing what he was doing. "All those in favor say 'aye.'"

"Aye," chuckled all the Dear Little Nit Wits.

"Oppose?" queried the Professor, still unable to get a rise out of Lizzie Twitch, who was busy writing Ramsey MacDonald's autobiography. And to the Professor's ques-

tion the Dear Little Nit Wits responded with malice aforethought:

"YES, WE HAVE NO BANANAS. WE HAVE NO BANA . . ."

And as the last eight notes were fading out over yon horizon, the Dear Little Nit Wits folded their tents like the Arabs and silently hurried to join the transcontinental bunion derby, which was just pulling into Grand Central Depot, three hours and fifty-two minutes late, gaslight saving time.

* * * * *

(Don't lose courage, gentle reader. Have mother pop some corn for you, and turn over to the next page, where you will find the true story of "Ouvrez la porte: Or, Patience Bumpstead at the abbatoir.")

CHAPTER VII

HERE it was Saturday and Aphrodite Godiva was just reading Tuesday's paper. All week long everything seemed to be topsy turvy, for hadn't Aphrodite done her Monday wash on Wednesday, her Tuesday ironing on Thursday, eaten fish on Monday, and baked a pot of pork and beans on Friday? My, my, and to make matters worse, Madame Mocha de Polka insisted on practising her singing lesson. When Mocha sang it was bad enough, but her practising was enough to turn the Kellogg peace pact into a declaration of war. And what do you suppose she was practising? She had just received a new song from Germany, which came over on the record voyage of the S. S. Europa, and it was called, "As pants the Hart Shaffner and Marx." No question about it being a beautiful song, and Mocha was learning it to sing at the next Democratic National Convention, if another one was ever held.

Lord Ashcart, ever quick to sense trouble, mooched over toward Aphrodite Godiva, and giving her one of those playful little nudges, like Firpo gave Jack Dempsey when he pushed him through the ropes, exclaimed:

"Aphrodite, how did things go at the bull fight today?"

"Sic temper tyrannus," tittered Aphrodite, taking the muffler off her noiseless typewriter.

"Really," was all Lord Ashcart could say, as his fingers wandered idly over the noisy keys. He was for continuing the conversation, but withdrew in favor of Lizzie Twitch who was seen coming into the room through the transom. Lizzie was like that all over, no one knowing just how she would appear on the scene next. Once, just for a playful joke, she had secreted herself in a ton of coal, which she thought was to be delivered at the White House, and when she came to, she found herself in the furnace of Tammany Hall in New York. Quite a narrow escape. And, too, she was covered with coal dust from head to foot, and not knowing how to get rid of it, she finally laughed it off. Yes, sir, that was Lizzie all over.

Professor Exczema Succotash, who was writing a new bass drum solo, for Vincent Lopez' band, laid down her brush and palette and directed a remark at Lizzie. This was the remark:

"Have you forgotten, Lizzie, dear, that you are due in just six minutes to address the Bulgarian Army on the relation of food to the starving Armenians?"

"No, on the contrary I am ready, Professor," gulped Lizzie, putting a little salt on her anchovies. "For weeks I have been busy preparing my paper and here it is." With that Lizzie lifted the hood of her automobile, and out jumped six of the Singer Midgets, each holding a scroll in his hand. These Lizzie quickly pieced together and she

made one long scroll that reached from the Capitol in Boston to the poorhouse in Cheyenne, Wyoming.

The Dear Little Nit Wits couldn't retain their impetuosity, and with a rousing shout they all joined hands and danced around Miss Twitch, singing lustily the favorite song of Paulino Uzcudun. You know the song of course. "How sweetly the roses are Schmeling." Lizzie was overcome, but was quickly revived with a bottle of Schmeling salts and a sledge hammer.

"I would suggest that we ask Miss Twitch to read us the composi . . . , the disserta . . . , the monogra . . . , the paper she has prepared," put in Gabriel Horn, who was trying to locate Pyorrhea on his new Rand and McNally atlas.

"A noble suggestion, and one worthy of our immediate consideration," answered Professor Musclebound, who had developed a Charley horse opening a can of sardines.

Miss Twitch was again overcome, but the Dear Little Nit Wits never lifted a finger to aid her. Realizing that nothing remained for her but to accede to their wishes, she mounted the chandelier and in that low sweet voice of hers, she began:

"Admirals, generals, corporals and kitchen police of the Bulgarian Army. I have brought you greetings from the straphangers of Brooklyn, the taxpayers of Zion City, the Washington American Baseball Team, and the Memphis Fife and Drum Corps. I am really honored this evening to be chosen to address this remarkable assembly, and I am not unmindful of the fact that my remarks should appeal par-

ticularly to the army. So, for weeks I have been working out a new recipe which I know will restore morale among the troops, promote the lance-corporals to lieutenants, the generals to admirals, the Captains to Majors and in truth revolutionize your kitchens."

"Hurray," shouted the Dear Little Nit Wits, not hearing a word that Miss Twitch had said.

"Thank you so much, my friends," said Miss Twitch, putting out in a boat for the Sandy Hook Lighthouse. "This recipe I have decided to call 'ukulele omelet.' My reasons for this title will become clear as we go on. But, first, let me suggest that you clean out the furnace to prevent those teeny weeny little particles of coal dust from getting into the omelet. You know, those little bits of coal dust which do so much to discolor the teeth. In selecting the ukulele, be sure to get one not too large, nor too small, but one just the right size. Don't bother to remove the strings, but wash the ukulele carefully in carbolic acid to rid it of varnish. Then cover it completely with little pieces of cactus. You should exercise great care to extract the little prickly portions of the cactus with your snow shovel. If you have no snow shovel, you might use your fly swatter.

"We next take three eggs, and would you permit me to recommend the eggs of the Australian croppleduffer, that cute little bird that lives in the marshmallow tree and sings all his songs in C sharp minor? The eggs should be broken carefully with a twenty pound sledgehammer, and be sure to see that a small portion of the shell remains with

the eggs. I don't know the reason for this, unless it makes the omelet a bit more—should I say embonpoint—or vox populi, or hoi polloi?"

"By all means," perked the Dear Little Nit Wits, going into a huddle behind the first base coaching box.

"Thank you so much," murmured Miss Twitch, not knowing that anyone had spoken. "Now, the next operation calls for beating the eggs rapidly for several hours with your rolling pin, and leaving them on the window sill until they become sunburned. While you are waiting for the eggs to become sunburned, mix up a thick syrup of talcum powder and axle grease and pour this mixture over the ukulele, placing the entire preparation in your ice box for baking. If you have any good results from this recipe, and I don't believe you will, but if you should, write to me and I'll be just as surprised as you are.

"Before I leave you, may I say, there is a happy land far, far away, and if you eat my ukulele omelet you will find this land drawing nearer and nearer. Goodnight and don't forget to blow out the gas."

When Lizzie had finished reading her paper, she discovered that she was all alone, for the Dear Little Nit Wits had hurried off to Hollywood to attend Bull Montana's birthday party. Lizzie, not minding the slight, quickly changed to her bathing suit, and in a trice was pedalling her bicycle over the Rocky Mountains.

* * * * *

(Mortimer, see who's at the door. What, a book sales-

man? Tell him I have a book and a darn good one too. And Mortimer, come back quickly as I must read you the next chapter of this book which I find is entitled "Pike's Peak or Bust: Or, Professor R. U. Musclebound upsets rowboat on Lake Erie.")

LORD ALGERNON PERCIVAL ASHCART

This picture shows Lord Ashcart winning the Eskimo dog team race. Lord Ashcart is seen patting Thorax, his lead dog, on the head

LIZZIE TWITCH

Lizzie Twitch takes a day off from her culinary duties to dry dishes for the Astors. Here we see Miss Lizzie with a cake of soap in her right hand and a towel in her left, or maybe it's an anvil

PROF. R. U. MUSCLEBOUND

This picture of the Professor was snapped by the society editor of the Plumbers' Guide. Muscle-bound is seen bending over to tie the shoelace on Queen Marie's sandal. Good old Muscleboun!

GABRIEL HORN

This picture shows Gabriel Horn holding open the gate through which the Kaiser is escaping from Germany. The wheelbar-row you see in the upper right-hand corner has nothing to do with the picture

CHAPTER VIII

"ANY rags, any bones, any bottles today," sang out the iceman, as he drove his Rolls Royce up fashionable Park Avenue in West New York.

The day had dawned early in the morning, as was its wont, and all the Dear Little Nit Wits were up and about. There was Lizzie Twitch busy at the piano, preparing her famous concrete marmalade and pickled shoe tongues for the breakfast. For, you see the Dear Little Nit Wits eat breakfast even as you and I. Here was Aphrodite Godiva learning her linotype lesson. There was Patience Bumpstead, trying to figure out a way to convert the Hoosac Tunnel into soda sippers. Professor Musclebound was practising a new juggling act with a washboard, a fly swatter and a couple of girls from the Ziegfeld Follies. Lord Ashcart, (and we still don't know what he has done with his trousers) was sniffing at a bunch of catnip, evidently trying to catch hayfever. And there too was Madame Mocha de Polka, doing her best to hit A flat with a spoon in her mouth, with Professor Succotash, executing a difficult adagio passage from the Mammoth Cave. Gabriel Horn made his presence known, as he called attention to his latest invention which had something to do with the grafting of

a hair mattress on a pair of roller skates. What a happy family!

Did you know that this was day of the big regatta? Of course it was! Why, all the newspapers were sending their crack (not cracked) reporters to write up this regatta, and among the scribes assembled could be seen several correct English experts and a want ad writer.

After breakfast the dishes were thrown into the bath tub as usual, and an argument arose concerning the personnel that was to do duty with the soap and towel. They drew straws to settle the argument and a member of the D.A.R. who was passing at the time, was the unlucky winner. How relieved the Dear Little Nit Wits were when they realized that they wouldn't have to dive into the bath tub for a plate or a spoon and come up with a second hand ham sandwich or a bread crust which Lord Ashcart had forgotten to eat.

"This is a glorious day for the regatta," piped Lord Ashcart, as he polished up the handle so carefully that now he's the ruler of the Queen's Na-vee.

"I always win my regattas on just such days as this," was Patience Bumpstead's offering, putting a saddle on Pancho the meanest broncho in the whole corral.

"Aw, nix, you ain't got no chanst in dis regatta," was Aphrodite's way of saying it with music.

"Don't forget that I'm a participant in this regatta, too?" said Lizzie Twitch, leaning over from the mumble seat.

"Where do I come in? Am I forgotten in this race en-

tirely?" was the logical question from one so young as Madame Mocha de Polka.

Then began a long verbal siege lasting from the early days of Phoencia up to the day of Commissioner Whalen's new traffic regulations. The outcome of the argument is still in doubt, several outlying precincts having never sent in their votes.

Seconds became minutes, minutes became hours, and finally the moment arrived for the big regatta. Lizzie was sailing under the colors of the Anti-Spinach Association; Mocha was backed by the survivors of the war of 1776; Patience was listed as representing the charter members of the Mayflower; and last and least was Aphrodite Godiva, flaunting the colors of the Electoral College. The regatta was held on the Jersey mud flats or maybe it was Wrigley Field in Chicago, they haven't decided which yet. And, by the way, each of the ladies had a different type of craft. For instance, Miss Twitch drove a one horse shay. Madame de Polka raced on wings of song. Aphrodite did her stuff on a pair of 12 foot stilts, and Patience paddled the Leviathan. There's the picture. Beautiful, isn't it?

As is usually the case, just before the race the contestants shook hands, while the spectators shook their heads. Lord Ashcart, still minus his plus-fours, planned to follow closely on the heels of the contestants, mounted on a kiddy car, with Professor Musclebound, the official scorer, seated on the English gentleman's right shoulder.

And now for the story of the big regatta, just as it was published in the Wall Street Journal. Miss Twitch was the

first to toe the mark in her one horse shay. Patience had a bit of difficulty paddling the Leviathan into position at the starting mark, but with the aid of a couple of tug boats and the Macom, she was finally set. Aphrodite Godiva was having great trouble keeping her stilts from sinking into the soft Jersey mud, but a modern Raleigh (or maybe it was a Chesterfield or a Melachrino) laid down his short vest for her to stand on. For some little time Mocha de Polka was unobserved, but soon she was seen floating through space on her wings of song and the great moment arrived.

I forget to tell you that the river (let's see was there a river? Well, we'll have to believe that there was a river for the purpose of the story) was jammed with all types of craft, and was ablaze with a myriad of colors, whites and blacks predominating. We saw tug boats, scows, sloops, a revenue cutter or two or three or four, steamers, liners, ferry boats, barges, schooners, and empty tomato cans. Oh, it was a gorgeous sight!

The first false start was caused by the five o'clock whistle of the Hoboken Water Works. The Dear Little Nit Wits thought it was their cue to get under way, but it was only the signal to the head engineer to turn-on the water for the regular Saturday night baptisms. Back to the starting mark they went, a bit chagrined but determined to do or die for dear old Rutgers. At last the zero hour arrived and the contestants got away in a cloud of dust.

As soon as one could see, it was plain that Mocha, on wings of song, was leading at the first half milepost, fol-

lowed closely in order by Patience, Aphrodite and Lizzie. Miss Twitch experienced a bit of motor trouble at the three-quarter mark and had to stop in Trenton to have her horse shod. Otherwise the first mile of the race was chuck full of ennui. At the mile and a quarter post it looked as if Mocha would sprain a feather or a cadenza, trying to overcome the lead which Patience had piled up in the Leviathan. Aphrodite Godiva, in a mad effort to make up three stolen laps, ran one of her stilts ten feet and three inches (official measurement) into the Jersey mud. Undaunted she continued to hop along on one stilt. Realizing that there lay three more miles to go, I tell you folks that gal was as game as they come. Believe me, her courage wasn't stilted.

But soon things began to happen! Patience ran into great complications trying to steer the Leviathan through traffic in the Loop in Chicago, and in self defense she lowered a life boat, but she forgot to take along a pair of oars.

It was just at this point that Aphrodite Godiva gained three yards, or maybe it was three pounds. Wait a minute, folks, it looks like three pounds from here. No, it was three pounds. Lizzie Twitch lost her horse but hitched herself to the one horse shay and drove herself like mad. And where were the other contestants, I hear you asking yourselves? And quite right you should, for Madame Mocha de Polka feeling certain of victory was lagging behind, circling the Statue of Liberty and dropping little packages of sachet powder to the Boy Scouts who were holding a basket lunch on Bedloe's Island. But, Aphrodite Godiva, what of

her, I hear you asking. Were you asking about Aphrodite? Well, here's the way my dear old mither told the tale to me. Shurrre, Aphrodite lost her other stilt, but she had both presence of mind and a pair of roller skates, and using the former to adjust the latter, she quickly entered the lists again, and with head bowed low, she set sail for the finish line, wherever that was.

The next thing we knew, Lizzie Twitch had come up even with Patience Bumpstead, hopped into her life boat and helped herself to the welsh rarebit which Patience had brought along to bribe the boys at the tape. Mocha de Polka, realizing that she was hopelessly out of the race due to causes beyond our control and the further fact that she had failed to repeat the chorus, sailed over Patience's head and lowered a long, blue ribbon which was attached to her waist. This Lizzie Twitch quickly fastened to the port side of the life boat, and when last seen, the boat with its occupants was running wildly through the streets of El Paso, Texas.

Fatigued, worn out, but with a heart of iron, Aphrodite Godiva stumbled over the finish line the winner. When we got our first glimpse of the victor, we saw her talking excitedly with Chic Sale. We don't remember which character Chic was impersonating at the time, but he wasn't himself, we are sure of that. If he had been he'd never have been at the finish line of this regatta.

Of course Aphrodite was hauled up before a microphone. Victors usually are, and according to the account published in College Humor, Aphrodite said:

"Well, folks, dat was one grand race, an' I enjoyed ev'ry week of it. I t'ought my life's ambition was goin' to look like a second hand firecracker. But tanks to de boys from Arkansas, who gave me dem roller skates, an' clean livin', I was able to win de regat . . . , regatter . . . , regat . . . , de race. Oh, by de way, I jes' signed me a contrac' to endorse some ukulele strings, so don't buy no ukulele strings widout my pitcher on 'em. Dat's all. So long."

Now, let's see. Oh, yes, we've accounted for the feminine personnel of the Dear Little Nit Wits. But what about Lord Ashcart and Professor Musclebound? Did I hear somebody ask that question? Oh, yes, the lady in the third row with the hoop skirt. Well, madam, here is your answer and I'm sure you will find it all that we guarantee it to be. Lord Ashcart, after the first twenty-four hours of the race, got a bit impatient with Musclebound flitting about on his shoulders, and casually stubbed his (Ashcart's) toe, which naturally catapulted Musclebound into Mrs. Wiggs' cabbage patch. When last seen, these two gentlemen were renting folding cots to the participants in the international chess tourney.

* * * * *

(You ain't heard nothin' yet, gentle reader. All the Dear Little Nit Wits will be back in the next chapter which is entitled: "Bon Voyage: Or, the Butcher's retort to Mocha de Polka.")

CHAPTER IX

ONE bright September afternoon, the Dear Little Nit Wits found themselves without anything to do. And, remembering that old adage that went something like this, "Satan finds work for idle hands to do," they all decided to go into town and pay their respects to the salesgirls at the Wiggins and Waggins Department Store. Undoubtedly the dear little salesgirls had nothing else to do but wait on a couple of thousand customers and would just love to have the Dear Little Nit Wits come in and ask them a lot of questions like "Is it hot enough for you?" or "Where is the basement?"

So Lizzie Twitch packed the lunch and they were soon on their way. Arriving at Wiggins and Waggins Department Store they talked over their plan of advance. Would they buy anything or just look? Would they ask silly questions or ask questions that really had a point to them? Would they handle the merchandise and ask prices, or just handle the merchandise? These and various other topics of discussion arose and were quickly squelched by Professor R. U. Musclebound, who never could see any reason for women to walk through department stores with no money in their pocketbooks and less sense in their heads. The more they talked, the more disgusted the Professor got,

and soon he left in the company of Gabriel Horn to work on his plans for a dry dock for wet goods. As soon as the girls were sure that they had really gone, they tip-toed through the door into the marvelous store of Wiggins and Waggins.

"Where are the horses?" murmurred Mocha, as she heard one of the salesgirls cry out "Hey, hey."

"There are no horses in a department store, Mocha," gulped Lizzie Twitch, looking right at Patience Bumpstead. But Patience had something else on her mind and couldn't be disturbed. So the question seemed to pass by unanswered and no one seemed to care a hunk.

In just a moment they were facing the elevator. They joined the merry throng which was waiting to ascend or descend whichever the individual mood might be. Finally the elevator door opened and there stood one of the handsomest elevator conductors that any of the Dear Little Nit Wits had ever laid eyes on before. Even more handsome than Lord Ashcart, and Lord Ashcart need never hide his face at a tug of war. (And speaking of Ashcart, we wonder where he is. He didn't come along with the rest of the party. Probably trying to remember where he laid his panties.) The Dear Little Nit Wits couldn't prevent the escape of a long drawn out "oh," which by the way didn't pass unnoticed by the handsome elevator conductor. And his clothes! My, my. Even the head usher at Roxy's never could hope to wear such clothes. The Dear Little Nit Wits thought sure he was a manikin until they heard him speak.

"Going up," said this second adonis, or maybe he was the third. We've really lost the count.

Lizzie Twitch hardly heard him speak and looking him in the eye, the left one, asked, "Is this the elevator?"

"Madame, this is the elevator," said the s. a. (meaning the second adonis), never looking to the right nor the left, nor the east, nor the west.

"Thank you so much, and will it carry me to the fourth floor?" continued Lizzie, trying to make conversation.

"Only one thing will prevent that, and that would be a discontinuance of our electric service by the local public utilities corporation, and Mr. Wiggins, the senior member of the firm of Wiggins and Waggins, owns 80 percent of the stock," was the complete and intelligent answer of our handsome elevator conductor.

"I believe I will go into the elevator," said Liz, picking up the train of her dress and depositing it in the northeast corner of the elevator. And Liz was followed by Mocha, Aphrodite, Patience and Exczema Succotash.

As the Dear Little Nit Wits entered the elevator, the conductor smiled in his best ten percent off for cash smile, and told the ladies that it would be a real pleasure to conduct them to any floor they desired in the store.

"You're a perfect gentleman," said Patience Bumpstead, pushing the dentist's hand away from her mouth. "Could you by any chance be John Barrymore?"

The handsome elevator conductor giggled and let go with this one. "No, no. I'm Mike O'Brien. Now, if you will pardon me just a moment, I'll make my first floor announce-

ment. Hear ye, hear ye, hear ye. This is the next elevator about to ascend to the floors above. All those desiring transportation should immediately enter the elevator, quickly and quietly. Stand back from the door, ladies, as we are about to leave the main floor."

Just like well trained soldiers the passengers obeyed the handsome elevator conductor and stood with bated breaths, probably bated with dandelion greens, with here and there a touch of garlic. Slowly the elevator got under way, but under careful guidance of our handsome conductor it arrived safely at the second floor. He placed his gloves on his hands and opened the door, at the same time letting his sonorous voice give vent to his innermost feelings in this manner:

"Ladies, we have arrived at the second floor on scheduled time, and if you will kindly give me your undivided attention I'll inform you of the merchandise which is dispensed on this floor.

> "Bassinets, clarinets, bridal veils and drugs.
> Bedspreads, carpet threads, casseroles and rugs.
> Music rolls, fish poles, punching bags and soap.
> Moth balls, overalls, spectacles and rope."

As soon as Mr. O'Brien had gotten rid of that he turned to watch the ladies leave the car, giving to this one a smile, to that one a grin, here a smile, there a grin, here and there a smile.

Patience Bumpstead, misunderstanding Mr. O'Brien's smile, puckered up her lips and remarked:

"Do you sell whatnots on this floor?"

"Phwatnots?" queried Mr. O'Brien, trying to imitate an Irishman.

"Yes, do you sell them on this floor?" again asked Patience, opening her trunk for the custom's inspector.

"Apparently you didn't hear me before. I'm sorry, but we do not sell phwatnots on this floor," answered the courteous elevator conductor, as he tipped his hat to Mr. Waggins, the junior partner of Wiggins and Waggins, owners of the department store. He continued:

"Now ladies, will you kindly enter the car quietly and quickly, as we are about to ascend to the third floor."

Lizzie Twitch couldn't contain herself longer and nudging Aphrodite Godiva murmured:

"What a relief to find such gentlemen running our elevators, Aphrodite."

"Yeah. Ain't it a relief," said Aphrodite, not knowing that at that very moment her ice box was running over.

"Bah," giggled Mocha de Polka.

"Yes," said Lizzie, "a sort of bas relief."

With that the door closed and the elevator began its long trek from the second to the third floor. The car reached the third floor right on time, and in his most cultured baritone voice our hero sang out:

"Window shades, razor blades, tricycles and dyes.
Walking sticks, toothpicks, Sunday school supplies.
Barber shops, lemon drops, curtain rods and inks.
Lamp frames, parlor games, overcoats and sinks."

The door opened gently, so as not to disturb the floorwalker who was signing a refund check for Mrs. Whoosis. The ladies, at the suggestion of Mr. O'Brien, filed out of the elevator quickly and quietly. That is, they all left but the Dear Little Nit Wits who remained huddled in a corner matching pennies.

"Do you sell whatnots on this floor?" asked Patience Bumpstead, forgetting apparently that even elevator conductors sometimes lose their tempers.

"Phwatnots?" again asked Mr. O'Brien, trying to make his speech resemble that of an inhabitant of the Emerald Isle. "No, not on the third floor. I'll tell you when we come to the phwatnot department. Oh, will the ladies wishing to ascend to the next floor kindly enter the elevator quickly and quietly? Thank you."

Professor Succotash removed her gag and remarked:

"Are all the elevator conductors in this store as courteous as you are?"

"Oh, yes," chiselled Mr. O'Brien, "we are all graduates of Garvard University, class of 1924, and each holds an AB degree and also a new degree known as ECB."

"ECB?" echoed all the Dear Little Nit Wits in unison.

"Yes, Batchelor of Elevator Conductoring," chuckled the handsome engineer of the lift. "I'm sorry to interrupt the conversation, but we must be on. We have to run on absolute schedule and the moment has arrived when we must ascend to the fourth floor. Will the ladies entering the car do so as quickly and quietly as possible?"

Again the elevator rose to the next floor, still on time.

Mocha was feeling a bit uneasy in the vicinity of the belt, but a smile from the elevator conductor brought that schoolgirl glow to her ears and all was well.

The Dear Little Nit Wits again held their breaths as they listened to the words of wisdom which dropped from the lips of the handsome elevator conductor.

> "Opera hats, bath mats, radios and fans.
> Bath scales, fairy tales, lingerie and pans.
> Bath sprays, violet rays, telescopes and bats.
> Union suits, rubber boots, linoleum and hats."

Having told the world all about the fourth floor merchandise, the handsome elevator conductor turned about to accept the plaudits of his passengers, as they filed past him on their way to mortgage their husbands' next week's pay. Mr. O'Brien, very carelessly allowed his eyes to meet those of Patience Bumpstead, and he knew he was in for it.

"Do you sell whatnots on this floor?" asked Patience for the third time, still full of fight.

"We haven't come to the phwatnot department," said Mr. O'Brien, trying to make his voice sound like that of one of Erin's true sons. "I'll tell you when we come to it."

Aphrodite wanted the elevator conductor to realize that she was present and she whispered in his ear, "It's a real pleasure to ride wid such a charmin' and careful elevator conductor as you'se is, Mr. Moiphy."

"Pardon the correction, madam, but the name is O'Brien. Mike O'Brien," said our hero, affecting one of those Charlie Chaplin poses.

"But you are a lovely elevator conductor, Mr. O'Brien." This from Lizzie Twitch, "and I'm going to write to the company and compliment them for engaging you."

"I'm afraid you're over-complimenting me. I'm only trying to do my duty and earn my salary. You see we only get a hundred dollars a week." And Mr. O'Brien bowed his head waiting for the lord high executioner to strike.

"Only one hundred dollars a week?" sang out the Dear Little Nit Wits, each reaching for a clean handkerchief.

"I knows a bank president what makes eighty-five a week, but jiminy he ain't as important as Mr. Callahan here." Of course Aphrodite would say something like that.

"Again I must correct you. O'Brien is the name. Mike O'Brien. Call me Mike and then you won't be wrong." With which Mr. O'Brien noticed that he was due to propel his car to the next and last floor of Wiggins and Waggins Department Store.

"This car is going up. All ladies desiring to purchase merchandise on the fifth floor will kindly enter the car as quickly and quietly as possible. Thank you." His hand touched the lever and the car moved upward, slowly but yet decisively. In a few seconds they had reached the fifth floor. The door opened and all stood waiting the phonetic and poetic message which they knew would drop from the lips of Mr. O'Brien, the genial elevator conductor, and neither were they disappointed.

"Lorgnettes and cigarettes, notions and perfumes.
Perambulators, percolators, handkerchiefs and brooms.
Alarm clocks, padlocks, phonographs and shirts.
Floor wax, dressing sacques, crockery and skirts."

Patience Bumpstead sidled over toward the door and looking the handsome elevator conductor right smack in the eye, warbled:

"Do you sell whatnots on this floor?"

The elevator conductor realized that he was cornered at last, and so did the only thing open for him to do. He spoke.

"Phwatnots? Oh, yes, you want phwatnots. Oh, yes. Now let me see. Oh, by the way what is a phwatnot?"

"I don't know. I never saw one," admitted Patience, signing her name on the dotted line, much to the pleasure of the young man who was working his way through college selling magazines.

"Well, I'll be . . . Mike O'Brien," said the courteous custodian of the moving cage, not forgetting that a man is a gentleman first and a Democrat afterwards. "Well, if you never saw one, how do you know that you want one?"

"Oh, I don't want a whatnot mister," said Patience, putting her shoulder to the wheel. "I just like to hear you say it, that's all."

Well, we ask you, what would you do in a like situation? And that's just what Mr. Mike O'Brien did. He threw back his shoulders and grinned. Several grins in fact. Lizzie Twitch got a bit nervous, as well as Aphrodite, Mocha and Exczema, and grabbing Patience by the left ear they hustled her out of the elevator. What they said to Patience was nobody's business and being nobody's business, not even the budding young author's, we say nothing about it here. In a few moments they became reconciled and Pa-

PROF. EXCZEMA SUCCOTASH

The Professor was caught in a playful mood. Here we see Exczema upsetting a rowboat in Central Park, New York, with the Scranton Alimony Club as her guests. Naughty, naughty, Exczema

PATIENCE BUMPSTEAD

This is Patience leaning over the roulette table at Monte Carle. During the morning hours she can be seen on the Riviera distributing gumdrops to the sailors home on leave

MADAME MOCHA DE POLKA

What expression is revealed in Madame Mocha de Polka's face as she listens to Galli Curci give an imitation of Mocha's rendition of "Lo, hear the gentile lark"

APHRODITE GODIVA

We were lucky to get this picture of Aphrodite Godiva, dancing with the Prince of Wales. The Prince has just stepped out for a few moments to telephone the King

tience promised not to disgrace them again, just as the soft voice of Mr. O'Brien was wafted to them up the elevator shaft from the floor below:

"Footballs, parasols, bathing suits and beads.
Jardinieres, brassieres, kites and garden seeds.
Kiddy kars, chocolate bars, garbage cans and maps.
Art goods, fish foods, dinner gongs and caps."

Just then a delivery boy came across the floor and the Dear Little Nit Wits concealed themselves in the packages which he carried. The packages were duly dispatched to the delivery trucks to be sent out the following morning. Eventually the next day arrived, and the delivery boys started out with trucks heaped high with packages. The Dear Little Nit Wits, in order to conceal their hiding place, didn't dare make a sound. The packages finally reached their destination, but the folks to whom they were addressed locked the doors and pulled down the shades, for the packages were C O D's and they were a little short of funds. Rather than spend another night in the delivery department of Wiggins and Waggins Department Store, they cut the strings and jumped from the truck and the last seen of them they were running and skipping and jumping over the housetops in Peoria, Illinois, singing to their hearts' content—

"YES, WE HAVE NO BANANAS. WE HAVE NO BAN . . ."

* * * * *

(Oh, Marc, hand me that asp will you? I've stood all

one human being could stand, and now the end is at hand. No. I'll give them Nit Wits one more chance. Turn over the page for me Marc, I want to know the story about "Wall Street Surrenders: Or, Gabe Horn outwits the cigar lighter.")

CHAPTER X

GENERAL LEW WALLACE'S DRAMA

BEN HUR

PRODUCED BY

THE NIT WIT DRAMATIC SOCIETY

SEE

The Beautiful Gowns of Asia Minor, Who Also Designed the Chariots, the Sandals, and Who Laid Out the Race Track, Without a T-Square or a cold chisel.

SEE

The Beautiful Arabian Steeds. The Stables. The Galley. The Green Grass. The Dancing Girls.

HEAR

The Clatter of the Horses' Hoofs as They Dash Madly Around the Race Track, Driven by the Hero, Ben Hur, and the Villain, Massela.

FEATURING SUCH WELL KNOWN

NIT WITS

AS

Gabriel Horn, as.....Ben Hur
Lord Algernon P. Ashcart, as.....Massela
Prof. R. U. Musclebound, as.....Quintus Arrius
Madame Mocha de Polka, as.....Tizrah
Lizzie Twitch, as.....Esther
Aphrodite Godiva, as..... Iras

Stable boys, buglers, soldiers, sailors, marines, dancing girls, wives, sweethearts, stenographers, and just friends.

ACT ONE

(Scene 1.—Ben Hur is seen straddling the cornice of his house, as Tizrah his sister is heard off stage singing and playing her own accompaniment on a Macedonian saxophone.)

Tizrah.—(Singing) "I wonder what's become of Sally. That old gal of mine."

Ben Hur.—Tizrah?

Tizrah.—'Tis me. Tizrah.

Ben Hur.—Ah! 'Tis you. Oh, what have you in your hand, Tizrah, my sweet sister.

Tizrah.—This is an amulet. I want you to wear it on your vest.

Ben Hur.—An omelet? For my vest?

Tizrah.—No, no. Not an omelet. An amulet. A talis-

man. Wear it for good luck and you'll never be pinched by no traffic officers.

BEN HUR.—No, you better wear it and you'll never be bothered by none of them drug store cowboys. You see, Tizrah, old skirt, I'm going to Rome. I must be a soldier. You stay here with mama.

TIZRAH.—A soldier? My, my, you might be killed.

BEN HUR.—Well, if I get killed, I'll come on back home and take that job in the chariot factory. Hark? I hear music approaching. (Bugle or ukulele.) That must be soldiers from the prae . . . praetor . . . from the p-r-a-e-t-o-r-i-u-m. What does that spell, Mocha. I mean, Tizrah, excuse it please.

TIZRAH.—Why, stupid, that spells praetorium. Oh, there's that tough guy, Massela, the Roman.

BEN HUR.—Yes, and there's Delirius Gratus, the new superintendent of the water works. He's a tyrant, Tizrah, trying to raise the water tax. It'll get so after a while that only the rich can take a bath in private. Oh, hear the crowd yelling at him. (Great boos by the milkmen, slaves, and visiting firemen.) Look, Tizrah, Delirius Gratus is sending his soldiers against the mob. I guess he's trying to give 'em the bum's rush. Hold on there, Gratus, you tyrant you! Bah!

TIZRAH.—Look out, brother Benny. Better be careful. Can't you see that brick under your hand is loose and it might fall and bean somebody. Watch it! Look out, Big Ben, the hour is striking for your downfall. I can feel it in my bones. Quick, the brick—catch it!

BEN HUR.—Don't shout at me so, Tizrah, you know how nervous I get since my last operation. Well, well, the brick fell right on the head of Delirius Gratus. My, my, what a headache he'll have. (Plenty of noise from the angry mob.) Oh, dearie me, sister Tizrah, I have levelled the big bum to the ground. I have killed the Roman Governor. But it was a accident, wasn't it, Tizrah?

TIZRAH.—And how. What will they do to you, Benny? Oh, look, they are coming up here. See they are here already yet.

BEN HUR.—Yes, here is Massela, the Roman hydrant.

TIZRAH.—No, no, Benny, tyrant, not hydrant.

BEN HUR.—Oh, yes, the Roman hydrant. That's what I said. Wait I would speak with him. Well, kid, what wouldst?

MASSELA.—My card, Ben Hur. I'm Massela, the Roman tyrant so called, but really a splendid and charming fellow if one knows me well. You see I'm here to talk about Delirius Gratus.

BEN HUR.—I'd much rather talk about something else. For instance, that new road house on the Appian Way, or that blaze they had over in Rome. I . . .

MASSELA.—I'm serious, though it is hard for me to look the part. Now, about Delirius . . .

TIZRAH.—It was a accident, kind sir.

MASSELA.—And who are you?

TIZRAH.—Tizrah.

MASSELA.—Oh, 'tis you?

TIZRAH.—Aye, 'tis me, Tizrah.

BEN HUR.—(Pleadingly, with a twinkle in his eye) Oh, Massela. You certainly can't forget our childhood together in Salt Lake City. Hear me, Oh, Massela, and do me no harm.

MASSELA.—(Returning the twinkle) Well, I can't see how I can do you any good. You tried to kill Delirius Gratus.

BEN HUR.—Oh, no, 'twas a accident as my sister, Tizrah, says.

MASSELA.—Well, according to the play I'm supposed to doubt you, so here goes. Take him away, my men, take him with his mother and his sister and his uncles and his aunts.

EVERYBODY.—(Including steamfitters, dressmakers, blacksmiths, gangsters and ambulance chasers) With his mother and his sister and his uncles and his aunts.

MASSELA.—Now, seal up the house and confiscate the property. I'm sorry, Ben Hur, but I cannot help thee.

BEN HUR.—Gosh, what a fix.

BEN HUR's MOTHER.—(Singing) "Oh, dear, what can the matter be."

BEN HUR.—Matter enough, mother. You and Tizrah is going to be sent away to the reform school and I've got to go on the galley.

B. H.'s M.—And be one of them vulgar boatmen? Oh, oh (faints and is carried out by two mail carriers).

MASSELA.—And so, Ben Hur, you tried to kill Delirius Gratus with a brick. But Delirius lives.

BEN HUR.—You wouldn't kid me would you bright eyes? (Haltingly.) You—say—Delirius—lives?

MASSELA.—Sure. They always do in the play. But you will be sentenced for life to the galley, just the same.

EVERYBODY.—(As before) To the galley. To the galley. To the gall, gall, galley.

CURTAIN

ACT II

(Scene 1.—On the galley. Many years have passed. Ben Hur has a beard and has learned to smoke cubebs. The galley is in command of Quintus Arrius, formerly of the Immigration Service. The galley for several days has been pursued by a German submarine, and by night by sea gulls.)

QUINTUS.—(Singing) "Oh, the moon is shining bright along the Wabash." Ah, slave. And what do the boys call you?

BEN HUR.—My father was a Prince of Jerusalem.

QUINTUS.—And his name?

BEN HUR.—Ith . . . Ith . . . I can't pronounce it. It's spelled I-T-H-A-N-A-R of the House of Hur.

QUINTUS.—Her what?

BEN HUR.—No, you don't understand. That's the last name. Hur.

QUINTUS.—Thou a son of Hur?

BEN HUR.—Yeah, and of him too.

QUINTUS.—Shake kid, I knew your father well. What brought thee here on the galley.

BEN HUR.—The subway. I mean, you see I was accused of attempting the life of Delirius Tomatus, but I am innocent.

QUINTUS.—Delirius Tomatus, eh? Ha, ha, ha. How I hate that button manufacturer. Tell me, Benny, did they give you a fair trial.

BEN HUR.—They gimme nothin'. Oh, look Squintus.

QUINTUS.—Now, listen, my laddie. Before you go too far. My name is not Squintus. It's Quintus.

BEN HUR.—That's what I said. Look, the submarine is gaining on us.

QUINTUS.—Toss one of them hand grenades over at 'em, Ben, and then we'll talk some more about the old homestead.

BEN HUR.—Sure. Let me have the grenade. There that'll fix 'em. (To make proper effect, drop hand grenade on stage.) Well, they're gone, Quintus.

QUINTUS.—I like the way you handle the apple, Benny. And I also like the way you handle the oar. What experience have you had as an oarsman?

BEN HUR.—Well, I pulled stroke on the track team at Ur-Sinus college, oh, mighty Squintus Arrius.

QUINTUS.—Not Squintus, Quintus. The "s" is as silent as a burned out tube. (Pause to show lapse of three hours.) Now, Ben, I used to know your father, and he was without doubt the best bean bag tosser in all Athens. I used to know him, when . . . (and here

continue solo conversation for two hours, choosing own subjects. Suggested subjects: Telephone rates; liver pads; gargoyles; the tsetse fly; broken window shades; stilts, etc.) . . . so, you see, Ben, I've got a great interest in you. If you wish I'll recommend you for a cadetship at Annapolis. What say?

BEN HUR.—No, thanks. I want to be a Roman soldier.

QUINTUS.—Well, then, let's make it West Point. Anyway from now on, since you've saved my life, and let's see, was it you that saved my life? Yes, I believe it was. Well, since you've saved my life, I'll recognize you as my own son and heir.

BEN HUR.—Well, that's darned nice of you Squintus, and . . .

QUINTUS.—No, not Squintus. Quintus.

BEN HUR.—All right, have it your own way. You ought to know what your name is. But what I was going to say was that I'll slave for thee.

QUINTUS.—Very well said, Ben, old clock.

CURTAIN

ACT III

(Scene 1.—Ben Hur is discovered sleeping behind the stables, with a horse collar wrapped about him. Iras, the village vamp approaches.)

BEN HUR.—(Yawning) And what's the name, please?

IRAS.—I'm Iras, the village vamp, and I'm a friend of Massela who you are going to race today at de Colisseum.

BEN HUR.—Come right in, Iras. I mean, how do you do, Iras, the village vamp. Any friend of Massela is a friend of mine. (Sotte voce, meaning sotte voce) From Massela, eh? Well, there's dirty work on foot here and on the other hand there's dirty work there too. (To Iras, looking her in the eye) Well, Iras, if you're a friend of Massela, whatcha hanging around me for, 'cause I'm his worst enemy.

IRAS.—I know dat, and dat's why I'm hangin' around you. I came down here to take a couple of nuts and bolts off'n your chariot so's you would break down in de race.

BEN HUR.—Yeah? You and who else? Say look here, Iras. I may look like a sap, but by jingo I ain't.

IRAS.—No foolin'?

BEN HUR.—Cross my heart, hope to die. Now if you're so smart, how's the betting on the race anyway.

IRAS.—Well, de boys down in Cicero's poolroom is bettin' ten to one on Massela.

BEN HUR.—Good. Now, Iras, you ain't very friendly with Massela are you?

IRAS.—Well, you know how it is. What you got on your mind?

BEN HUR.—I want you to take these five francs and bet 'em on me.

IRAS.—Why, Benny, you ain't got no chanst in dis race. I

just took one of the wheels off'n your gig, but by golly, I'm goin' to put it back on again.

BEN HUR.—That's the spirit, Iras, the village vamp. Now, go and bet that money on me to win.

IRAS.—(Sobbing) I love you Ben Hur, honest I does, and I hopes you wins.

BEN HUR.—Gee, Iras, with the love of a good woman behind me I can't lose.

CURTAIN

ACT IV

(Scene 1.—The Colisseum. Iras and Quintus Arrius are together in the four dollar seats, eating peanuts and drinking pop. Off stage can be heard intermittently the cries of the many thousands who are in the Colisseum.)

IRAS.—Oh, gee, look. Listen. (Bugle call.) There goes the fish horn, calling the horses out of de haddock. Gee, ain't dose pretty nags.

QUINTUS.—Ah, pretty Iras, and how does the betting go?

IRAS.—Just grand, Quintus Arrius. Boy, now I asks you confidentially, ain't dose nags de berries?

QUINTUS.—Yes, they are. But do you think that Ben Hur has a chance?

IRAS.—Sure ting. And a good one too. But hark, Squintus?

QUINTUS.—Not Squintus. Quintus. If that happens again

I'll petition the Supreme Court of Rome to change my name.

IRAS.—I'm sorry, Quintus. Never mind. Look here comes the race.

VOICE:—(Offstage) They're off! (Cries of "Massela" and "Ben Hur," alternating until the end of the act, if not too tired.)

QUINTUS.—Do you know, Iras, I do believe that Ben Hur will win.

A STRANGER.—Sez you?

QUINTUS.—Sez me.

A STRANGER.—Oh, yeah? An' fer how much, pal?

QUINTUS.—Two francs.

A STRANGER.—Covered.

QUINTUS.—See, Iras, Ben Hur is now taking the lead. Isn't this jolly? Now it looks as if my adopted son and heir were to be winner after all.

ANOTHER STRANGER.—Sez you?

QUINTUS.—Sez me.

ANOTHER STRANGER.—(Same one) Oh, yeah? Fer how much, pal?

QUINTUS.—Oh, six rubles.

ANOTHER STRANGER.—(Same one) Covered.

IRAS.—Oh, look, Masella is gaining on Ben Hur. He is playing dirty. Look at dat. He tried to poke one of Ben's horses in de ear. Let's tell de referee. Oh, gee, look?

QUINTUS.—Don't keep saying look. Did you think I was sitting here with my eyes shut?

IRAS.—But look, Squint, look, Ben Hur is ahead again. (Crowd cheers and here and there we hear "hot dog" and "ice cream cone" and once in a while "vanilla soda.")

QUINTUS.—Oh, look now, Iras, there sit Demosthenes and his beautiful wife.

IRAS.—Don't be a sil, Quintus, Demosthenes ain't born yet.

QUINTUS.—Oh, so he's not. I wonder who that could be. It looks something like Mary Pickford. Could that be Douglas with her? Oh, Doug? No, I guess not. Well, I guess it's a couple of other fellows. How's the race now, Iras?

IRAS.—Swell. Look at Ben Hur now. Do you know dat dis is de last ten laps dey's on now?

QUINTUS.—Why, what's this? Look at that scoundrel Massela. He stops at nothing. See him leaning out of his chariot and with a monkey wrench is deliberately taking the wheels off Ben Hur's chariot. What a scoundrel. Oh, Ben! You're losing your wheels.

IRAS.—(Very excitedly) And now look, Squintus. Ben Hur has no wheels but he is winning anyways. Maybe de wheels was a detri . . . an impedi . . . a . . . a . . . a . . . maybe de wheels was in de way. See, Ben Hur leads.

QUINTUS.—Now Massela leads.

IRAS.—Now Ben Hur leads.

QUINTUS.—Massela leads.

IRAS.—Ben Hur leads

QUINTUS.—Massela

IRAS.—Ben Hur
QUINTUS.—Massela
IRAS.—Ben Hur
QUINTUS.—M
IRAS.—B
QUINTUS.—M
IRAS.—B
IRAS and QUINTUS.—Ben Hur Wins.

CURTAIN

ACT V

(Scene 1.—This act was added since the original play was written. Ben Hur is seen standing in front of a microphone, with radio announcers and control men surrounding him.)

ANNOUNCER.—And now, ladies and gentlemen, you will hear the voice of the victor himself, Ben Hur.

BEN HUR.—Well, folks. It was a good clean race and the best man won. Just tell the world that I did it for the wife and kiddies. So long, see you in Tyre.

FINAL CURTAIN

(And we don't mean perhaps)

* * * * *

(Four o'clock in the morning. Oh, Wheatley, will you please close my window and turn on my light. I find it is

impossible to sleep this night. I've rolled and tossed ever since I permitted my eye to fall on that story of Ben Hur. And Wheatley, hand me that darned book again. Before I go to sleep I must read the story of "Making mountains out of mole-hills: Or, Lord Ashcart as the human pump handle.")

CHAPTER XI

OF ALL the people in this world who were hiding their talents under a bushel basket, perhaps none was as gifted as Patience Bumpstead, our interior desecrator. In fact, Patience never knew she had any talents until her father's pet goat ate up the bushel basket and exposed her talents to view. There they lay! Sparkling in the October twilight like a new gold tooth.

"Oh, see my talents," cried Patience, jumping out of the path of the on-coming fire engines. And all the neighbors came bringing with them gifts of myrrh and incense and a new bag for her vacuum sweeper. How happy Patience was! And how happy were her parents, because they were a little afraid that Patience would make good her threat to sing bass in Paul Whiteman's band.

"What good are my talents if I haven't got the proper tools to back them up with?" inquired Patience, putting the thirteen ball in the side pocket, much to Willie Hoppe's disgust.

And would you believe it, Santa Claus heard that question and answered it in his own inimitable way. For on Christmas morning when Patience awoke, there in her stocking was the cutest little buzz saw, a bag of nails and a bill for same from Hammacher, Schlemmer and Company.

Patience overlooked the bill and immediately set about to construct a submarine that would sail under the water as well as beneath it.

But why burden you now, dear reader, with all the things that Patience did with her buzz saw and a bag of nails. Suffice it to tell you that she was the builder of the Brooklyn Bridge, the Eiffel Tower, the Roosevelt Dam, the Chrysler Building and a few other inconsequential things which never brought her in a single cent in royalty. And, oh, yes, did you know that Patience Bumpstead was the first person to use roller bearings on a hoop skirt? Well, tiring of working for love and love alone, Patience became imbued with a great desire to do something for real money, or jack as the amateur football players call it. You see she was still wearing the same dress that Priscilla wore the night she gave Captain John Smith the gate.

So, after studying over several professions, like housewifery, bridge playing (professional), correct speech, advice to the lovelorn, etc., she came upon the happy idea of interior desecration. Knowing as little about this subject as any other, she knew she was on the right track. As soon as she had made her decision she notified the Speaker of the House of Representatives in Washington, and she was given a dandy writeup on the front page of the Congressional Record, with pictures and everything.

Well, nothing would do but she must come to Washington and speak before Congress on her favorite subject. Her talk was delivered under the auspices of the Bureau of Penal

Institutions of the Departure from Justice. And this is the way the story appeared in the Congressional Record:

Speaker: Ladies and gentlemen of the Congress of the United States, assembled in the City of Washington, District of Columbia. We are gathered here this morning to listen to Miss Patience Bumpstead of New Hampshire.

Congressman from New Hampshire: I object. New Hampshire does not recognize Miss Bumpstead.

Speaker: Who cares. Miss Bumpstead of Maryland.

Congressman from Maryland: I object. On behalf of my beloved constituents I wish to say that the sovereign State of Maryland does not recognize Miss Pumpstead.

Patience Bumpstead: The name is Bumpstead. B like in Birth of a Nation. Not P like in Pumpernickle.

Speaker: The change will be duly recorded in the minutes of this meeting. (*Applause*) We will continue. As I was saying, we are going to listen to Miss Patience Bumpstead of Peking, China, who is going to talk to us on the subject of interior desecration. The Sergeant at Arms will lock all doors and windows and ask the United States Aquamarine Band to play "Patience must have her reward." Go ahead Miss Bumpstead.

Miss Bumpstead: Good morning, my lovers of beautiful homes. (*Applause.*) It is a great pleasure to come to Washington and talk to the Congress of these United States on my favorite subject "Interior Desecration." This morning I address my remarks to those who live in houses that have floors in them (*applause*).

Congressman from Illinois: Ka-choo. Ka-choo.

Miss Bumpstead: Thank you. We all admit that floors are most important in our homes, and I want to tell you this morning how to make your floors useful and at the same time arrange them so they won't get in your way (*deafening applause*). Just think of what punishment a floor has to stand. Every time we put our foot down we put it on the floor.

Congressman from Porto Rico: Etrubsn quedededo bsnipk.

Miss Bumpstead: Thank you. The poor floor has to stand the burden of supporting the piano, the tables and chairs and the bath tub. Does this seem right?

Reporters in the Gallery: Yes and no.

Miss Bumpstead: It seems to me that the floor has been the goat long enough and I'm in favor of shifting the burden to some other portion of the house, preferably the ceiling (*loud applause, cheers and a few scattering hiccoughs*). All those in favor raise the right hand.

All Congressmen: (Rising) I solemnly swear to defend the Constitution of the United States against . . .

Speaker: (Rapping with gavel on stenographer's head) Order! Order! Miss Bumpstead, I must apologize to you. You see, every time a Congressman raises his right hand he imagines he is being sworn into office again. It has become a habit with him. Continue Miss Bumpstead.

Miss Bumpstead: Thank you. Now why not take up the floors and send them away to Palm Beach for a few weeks' vacation?

Congressman from Florida: I object. Florida has enough dead wood now without bringing in a lot of floors.

Congressman from Utah: I second the motion, though I didn't hear it.

Speaker: The Congress will come to order.

Congressman from New Jersey: Order? Two mint juleps for me and a glass of water for Miss Bumpstead.

Speaker: Continue, Miss Bumpstead, and pay no attention to the primary class in the front seats (*applause*).

Miss Bumpstead: No floor is so hard that it wouldn't appreciate the beauties of the Atlantic Ocean (*loud applause*). Think of the fishing and the swimming the floors could have at Palm Beach and then when they come home they would be glad to settle down for the winter. Now, my lovers of beautiful homes (*cheers and cries of "Tiger"*) I know that lots of people get real tired of seeing floors laying around the house. If you are one of this class why don't you take up the floors and put them down in the cellar or up in the attic for a while, and maybe you will miss them enough to want them back again (*not so much applause*). Now, another thing, some of you I know don't like the looks of your floors. Well, if you didn't put cold cream and ice packs on your faces you might not like the looks of them either, so why not try putting some cold cream and ice packs on your floors and then see what a wonderful change it will make. Anyway, my lovers of beautiful homes (*laughter*) give them some consideration. If you don't like them, get rid of them. A floor is only as strong as its weakest splinter. My motto is "Give the

floor a little love and don't forget the broom." Good morning, and maybe sometime the Land Office will ask me to come to Washington and address you on the subject of hemstitched roofs (*some applause but not much*).

Congressman from California: I move that we give Miss Patience Bumpstead a rising vote of thanks and ask her not to hurry about returning.

Congressman from Utah: I second the motion, though I didn't hear it.

Speaker: Will the gentleman from California yield?

Congressman from California: Yield? Humph! Yield nothing.

Congressman from Connecticut: California never did yield anything.

Miss Bumpstead: I think it's just too wonderful that you gentlemen should be so interested in me and my work, but honestly I must run along now and address the D. A. R. I'm going to talk on the subject of "My blue lists are black lists now." Good morning, gentlemen, and give my love to Carter Glass. He always did give me a pane.

And so Patience took her leave of Congress, amid deafening applause coming principally from the char ladies in the gallery. The Congressmen were all tired out, what with their debentures and farm relief, and after listening to a special committee from the middle west sing their theme song, "Oh, relieve us of all those non-bearing young farms," these solons pulled their sheets up about their necks and went back to sleep, leaving a call for 9.30 Friday.

But returning to Patience, we find she was very happy. Very happy. She had at last come to the time in her life when she was considered a "big shot." So, with malice aforethought she dashed down the Capitol Steps, eight at a time, throwing kisses hither and yon, and singing to her heart's disgust, "YES, WE HAVE NO BANANAS. WE HAVE NO BAN . . ."

* * * * *

(Oh, Wilbur, the end is near, but before I go I have one request to make of you. You have never failed me before, so don't fail me now, and I shall reward you handsomely in my last will and testament. And particularly in the codicil. The green one. Please turn over to the next page, Wilbur, so I may see the true story of "Boat Race Day at Reno: Or, Lord Ashcart and the rusty nail file.")

CHAPTER XII

IT MUST have been all of three o'clock in the afternoon of the day in question, when Madame Mocha de Polka peeked out from behind the bridge lamp, and motioned to Aphrodite Godiva, who was straining her ears listening to the whispering trombonist on the radio. Aphrodite acknowledged the greeting, going into the nineteenth day of her eighteen day diet.

"What's on your mind, kiddo?" perked Aphrodite, her voice resounding through hill and dale and back to Pittsburgh.

"Have you noticed, Lord Ashcart?" giggled Mocha, waving a red shirt in the path of the Twentieth Century Limited, which had lost three hours coming through Keokuk, Iowa.

"Sure, I seen him, but he's so busy he ain't noticed me," was all Aphrodite could think of for the nonce.

"That's just the trouble with him," shouted Mocha, "he's got one of them insincerity complexions, I guess. He hasn't spoken to a soul all day."

"Gee, dat ain't no tough break fer nobody," was Aphro's snappy response. "When he gets his nose into a book, you'se can't even coax him away wid a pack of Camels."

"Humph," said Mocha. "I wonder what the name of the book is."

"Well, dere's only one way ter find out, an' dat's to ask him," inquired Aphrodite Godiva, just as the jury filed in.

"Funny I didn't think of that," cheered Mocha, asking the orchestra leader for a chord in G. "Oh, Lord Ashcart, me and Aphrodite wants to know what book you're reading."

"Yes, to be sure. The whole world wants to know, and that's why I'm reading it, so I can tell them. You see, my Dear Little Nit Wits, I have recently signed a contract with the Chicago Daily News to write book reviews for the Detroit Free Press. I am now engaged in making my study of the first two books assigned to me."

"And what are the books, Lord Ashcart?" rallied Mocha de Polka, shooting over a left jab to the shoulder that landed in the press box.

"The telephone directory and the dictionary," said Lord Ashcart, without a moment's hesitation, not knowing that the Yankees had dropped another double header to Strangler Lewis.

"Oh, do review for us. Show us how you review," duetted the two bashful young ladies aforementioned, getting ready to sweep the dust off Hampton Roads.

"I believe I will. It will give me courage and stamina, and maybe you could criticize my criticism. How's that?" said Lord Ashcart, tuning his ocarina.

"Stupendous," bellowed the same two young frails, not realizing that Lord Ashcart had spoken to them.

And so, it came about that Lord Ashcart, and goodness knows we do wish that he could remember what became of his trousers, adjusted his monocle and after being firmly ensconced in his jaunting car, he began:

"Ahem, I have been asked by Tinker and Evers and Chance, the publishers of a number of our most prominent attics . . ."

"No, no, you mean best sellers," I suggested, not wishing to see Lord Ashcart show his true colors.

"Yes, so it is. Best sellers," agreed the gentleman of royalty. "These two books which I have been asked to review are the dictionary, written by a chap named Webster, and the telephone directory, the author's name not appearing on the edition which I am reviewing.

"To begin with, the dictionary is too long, Much too long. It has twenty-six chapters, and contrary to the style of most books, the chapter headings are stolen from our alphabet. Nothing original about it at all. I don't see why the author of the alphabet doesn't do something about it. Here is a clear case of plagiarism, and the copyright office should be notified. I find that the English used is very good, but there seems to be absolutely no connection between the words. I read it for several hours and could make neither pate nor appendage out of it."

"You couldn't make what out of which?" interrogated Madame Mocha de Polka, making the score forty love in favor of Big Bill Tilden or was it Charlie Paddock?

"Why, pate nor appendage," repeated Lord Ashcart, refusing to open the door to the brush salesman.

"You means, head ner tail," suggested Aphrodite, pushing her tin cup into the very faces of the passersby.

"My error," acquiesced Lord Ashcart, reading from right to left. "As I was saying I could make neither head nor tail out of the bally book. For instance, take page 86. The story reads like this: Dispose, disposition, dispossess, disposure, dispraise, dispread, disproof, etc. Now there seems to be no sense to that. First, we have a noun, then a verb, then a noun, and another verb, and I can't seem to find a single adjective. Now, you know there must be an adjective in order to make intelligent reading. And so, this book continues for page after page with no reference to the hero and the heroine. What is it supposed to be, a love story or another murder mystery? But, then we are living in a very modern age and perhaps this is the latest style of writing adopted by our English authors. However, I would say that for a book which contains all the words of the English language, it is impossible to thrash it."

"Say, what's de idee, impossible to thrash it?" inquired Aphrodite, bringing home the bacon to Mammy down in Macon.

"Why, perhaps you say in America—er—cawn't be beaten," was Lord Ashcart's way of passing with thirteen spades in his hand. "But to continue, I wouldn't recommend the dictionary for light reading. It might, however, be quite suitable to give as a Christmas gift to one's mother-in-law, or to one who has given up drinking in a big way."

"Gee, you'se wonderful," echoed Aphrodite, who was the older of the Siamese Twins.

"You're marvelous," trilled Mocha de Polka, hitch-hiking from 42d Street and Broadway to Central Park.

"Yes, of course," agreed our pantless hero, still believing that Edison invented the saxophone. "But to continue, I must tell you about this other book which I have been reviewing. The telephone directory is published by Bell, Telephone and Company. To begin with, this book lacks interest. I find page after page with nothing but repetition. For instance, take page 413."

"Aw, you take it, Lord Ashcart, can't you see I'm busy," intimated Mocha de Polka, ordering the boys out of the trenches by Christmas.

"Yes, I'll take it," chirped Lord Ashcart, sinking the putt that gave him the U. S. Opium Championship. "Now on page 413, I see nothing but Smith, Smith, Smith, and the various words are placed one under the other. I cawn't make a bit of sense out of it all. The word 'murder' doesn't appear once throughout the whole bally book, and though I did see the words 'crook' and 'love' mentioned, they never did appear on the same page. I cawn't for the life of me see why this book is so popular, and personally I wouldn't have reviewed it if I hadn't come upon a copy accidentally on the floor of a subway train. And another thing about this amazing volume. I don't care for its binding. It's gotten out in a very cheap way. And, too, a book to be a big success should have illustrations in it, and this volume which I have reviewed had nothing in the way of pictures, with the exception of a blue bell on the cover. Why pick out a blue bell for illustrating a book, when there are hun-

dreds of other flowers much more beautiful. Personally I would prefer to see a Mack Sennett bathing girl on the cover."

"Naughty, naughty, naughty," warned Lizzie Twitch, who had been hiding in the canary cage all the time Lord Ashcart had talked.

"Pooh, pooh pa doop," scoffed Professor R. U. Musclebound, changing to his summer underwear as advised in the street car ads.

And so, the Dear Little Nit Wits thought that Lord Ashcart had finished with his reviewing, and were just about to go down to the dock and watch the Katzenjammer Kids unload a cargo of pearls, when he called to them.

"Ah, you thought I had finished, didn't you? Just one more word and I'll let you go. Now, adverting to my description of the telephone directory, let me say that you can't purchase a copy of this bally book. Wonder how the publishers make their money?"

With that the Dear Little Nit Wits were certain that Lord Ashcart had talked himself out, and then for a moment everything was quiet. The silence was of short duration, however, for into the room came romping Patience Bumpstead and Professor Exczema Succotash, followed by the home run hitters of the Lucy Stone League. Lord Ashcart was the first to notice that something was wrong, and grabbing his valise which he hadn't unpacked since he had returned from the World's Fair in Chicago, he rushed madly from the little white house with the little green blinds at the end of honeymoon lane.

"You forgot your penwiper," shouted Professor Succotash, writing down the words of "Annie Laurie" on the back of her algebra.

Lord Ashcart appeared not to have heard Exczema calling after him, and when last seen he was being madly chased by a policeman in Philadelphia, and they were both walking.

* * * * *

(Come, come, Rodney, open another bottle of kumquats and we'll while away an hour or two reading this silly book. The next chapter I see is entitled "Who is Mocha de Polka: Or, is tripe a game or a punctuation mark?")

CHAPTER XIII

EVER since three o'clock, and we mean three o'clock in the morning, Lord Ashcart had tried to go back to sleep. He was first awakened by a neighbor's cat singing "O Sole Mio," and then Professor Musclebound started to snore, and Madame Mocha de Polka was heard out in the woodshed splitting wood for the morning's fire. All in all there was no more sleep for Lord Algernon. So, he arose and dressed and busied himself with the supper dishes, which had remained unbathed from the night before.

He was very careful not to disturb the rest of the sleeping household, and as he washed a knife or a fork he gently laid it on the washboard. But the minutes wore on, and you know how minutes wear on, particularly at this time of the year, and Lord Ashcart noticed that every once in a while, the ring of the silver seemed to harmonize with one of Musclebound's snores and one of Mocha's grunts reaching him from the woodshed. Clever man that he was, he soon synchronized the three tones and before he knew it, he had written a new song which he chose to call "Oh, Baby what a (k)night," or "King Arthur's tribute to Sir Galahad."

Suddenly he heard someone clearing his throat behind

him, and peeking slyly over his shoulder, he discovered Professor R. U. Musclebound standing on the threshold of the kitchen. Lord Ashcart surveyed the Professor, much as any civil engineer might survey an uncivil conductor, and taunted him with this:

"Oh, Musclebound, and why are you up so early this morning?"

"Well, Ashcart, I don't like to tell you this, but today is the day I walk across the Grand Canyon on tight rope," tossed Musclebound, heaving his chest at least 48 feet for a new indoor record.

"Oh, so it is, but why are you up at this unusual hour? The clock in yon steeple registers but four o'clock," suggested Lord Ashcart, as he battened down the hatches. "The tight rope event won't take place until four this afternoon."

"I know all the facts, Ashcart. I've got a program. But you must remember that for one to walk across the Grand Canyon on tight rope, it might be well for him to be sure that he will accomplish what he sets out to do," saying which the Professor went into a dance, just as Mocha returned from the woodshed with her arms filled with asparagus, broccoli, and a few sticks of wood.

"The next time they want any wood split in this house they can do it themselves, and I don't mean maybe," bellowed Mocha as she spread her new fur coat across the divan. "Musclebound seems to be getting all the attention in this house just now. I guess you folks have forgotten that I've got to sing next year for the Society for the Sup-

pression of the Boop boop pa doop. No one seems to care whether I get there or not."

"Yes, we do, Mocha," said Lizzie Twitch, looking down from the chandelier and dropping little bits of pink and orchid confetti on Mocha, Musclebound and Ashcart.

It was plain to see that Mocha had crawled out of the wrong side of her bunk, and that seems rather strange when one considers that Mocha for years has slept standing up. But Ashcart, a pretty good old scout though possessing a very poor memory when it comes to recalling the whereabouts of certain parts of his attire, picked Mocha up in his arms, and in a jiffy was giving her a pig-a-back ride all around the front yard. They were playfully imagining that he was Man o' War and she was Earl Sande.

Musclebound was really in earnest when he told Lord Ashcart that he wanted to be sure he could accomplish the big feat of walking over the Grand Canyon on a tight rope, before he made a fool out of himself. So, for the next few hours he was practising on a clothes line suspended from the back door knob to the cold water faucet in the sink. Of course this was not quite so high as the rope stretched across the Grand Canyon, but yet it was good practise, and oh, how Musclebound loved it.

You won't mind, will you, if we skip several hours of the day, and bring ourselves and yourselves up to within a few minutes of the start of Musclebound's epoch making adventure? Several things we want to tell you concerning this stunt. First, it was to be broadcast. Yes, sir, Gabriel Horn, that demon announcer was going to be at the micro-

phone, and all the Dear Little Nit Wits, with the exception of Musclebound, were going to be in the Graf Ashcart, which would travel parallel with the death-defying Professor.

"Well, now let's check up and see if I have all my equipment," murmured Professor Musclebound, making a face at the undertaker.

"I'll help you check it off, Musclebound," volunteered Lord Ashcart, who had been present at every important event in history since the landing of the Pilgrims.

"I'll appreciate that, Lord Ashcart, and you can tell the reporters for me that I want your name mentioned in my story," was Musclebound's way of contributing to the relief of the newt's grandmother.

So Ashcart began:

"One pair of roller skates."

"Check."

"One portable cook stove."

"Check."

"One portable phonograph, and twenty-seven records, one scratched."

"Check."

"One standard army pup tent."

"Check."

"One can of beans." This is Lord Ashcart still talking.

"Make that one can of pork and beans." Musclebound still checking.

"One pair of snow shoes and one half pair of skis."

"Check."

"One pound of steak. One pound of coffee. One dozen eggs."

"Check."

"Well, I guess that's all, Musclebound. Aren't you going rather heavily laden?" And what a mistake it was for Ashcart to question the Professor's capacity for anything.

"A Musclebound could never be too heavily laden. This will all be child's play for me. And, by the way, all you reporters make a note of that last remark." Unfortunately for the Professor the reporters hadn't yet reported. But Aphrodite Godiva, not wanting Musclebound to be perturbed at a moment like this, disguised her voice like that of the "New York Daily Mirror" and said, "Yes, sir."

It was but the work of a few moments for Musclebound to get this equipment adjusted, and the Dear Little Nit Wits took their seats in the Graf Ashcart.

Gabriel Horn proudly took the microphone in his hand and hardly realizing what a tremendously big event he was about to broadcast, cleared his throat, just as Lord Algernon gave the crew the signal to lift the Graf Ashcart off the ground and shove it in to the air. Sometimes the Graf Ashcart was like that. It was a bit logy and needed someone to rouse it. And this was one time when it felt just like that. Before the Dear Little Nit Wits realized it, Professor Musclebound was about a hundred yards from the edge of the Canyon, and Mocha, having the strongest pair of lungs, due to her hemstitching proclivities, yelled at Musclebound:

"Oh, Musclebound? Come on back. We ain't started

yet." And her voice echoed and re-echoed throughout the Grand Canyon for exactly twenty-seven minutes by Gabe's wrist watch, which hasn't ticked a second since he bought it.

The Professor, a bit disconcerted, made his way back along the tight rope, and finally reached the starting point.

"What kind of a how do you do, is this?" questioned the Professor, as he heard someone murmur "Wie gehts."

"I'm quite disturbed, Professor," said Lord Ashcart, as he threw aside his water wings and struck out for the shore, forty miles away. "I've just discovered that we have no gas in the Graf Ashcart. But we'll remedy that, Professor, in a moment. The reporters have just arrived and I've got them talking into a horn which they think is transcribing their notes on wax, but in reality the horn is piped to the gas bag of the dirigible. It's more than half full now."

"You should have been born a Musclebound, Lord Ashcart," horned in the Professor as he hurriedly ran his finger through the want ads.

"Bad enough to be an Ashcart, widout wishin' no more hard luck on him," put in Aphrodite, spearing a hot liner and doubling the Rajah at second.

"Now, look here Aphrodite, you can't talk about Algy like that in my presence," was Lizzie Twitch's courteous response to the navy's salute of twenty-one guns.

"Well, let's not argue longer about something of which we know nothing. I see the reporters are now through talking, and the bag is full of gas, so let's not delay longer,"

said Lord Ashcart, winking his eye at the chief bos'n's mate.

"That's music to my ears. I can't stand around with this equipment on me much longer. Let's start." And with that the Professor placed his left foot, no I believe it was his right foot on the rope, stretched across the Grand Canyon. The reporters' cameras clicked, the Graft, pardon me, Graf Ashcart lifted its grey nose off the ground, and the zero hour had arrived. Now let's look in on the Graf Ashcart, where Gabriel Horn is to tell the world about this big stunt.

"Ladies and gentlemen, this is Gabriel Horn, announcer, telling you all about the big feat of Professor R. U. Musclebound, who is now about twenty yards from the edge of Grand Canyon. I should have told you, that Professor R. U. Musclebound, who knows no fear, is walking on a tight rope stretched across Grand Canyon. I've got my eye right on him. Now he's walking. He's walking faster. Now, he's trotting. Now he's dog trotting. Now he is walking again. He seems to be in good condition. Wait I'll holler over to him and see what he says. Oh, Musclebound, how's your condition?"

"I'll make it up," came back the answer from Musclebound, who was about forty yards away from the Graf Ashcart, and who still thought he had flunked his second year bookkeeping at the Triumph Business College.

"Folks, this is Gabriel Horn announcing. Musclebound says he'll make up his condition, whatever that means. This is Gabe Horn announcing in my usual slow tempo.

Now Professor Musclebound is about one-half mile from the shore and we believe . . .

"Wait a minute, Gabriel. Do I or do I not see dark clouds coming up the Canyon?" inquired Lizzie Twitch, leaving an oyster stew burning on the stove.

Gabriel fondly laid down his microphone, and turned to where Miss Twitch was pointing. All the Dear Little Nit Wits gathered closely about Gabriel as he made his decision.

"You *do* see dark clouds, Miss Twitch, and if I ain't mistaken, we're in fer a storm," saying which Gabriel again picked up the microphone only to lay it down and call the Nit Wits to gather about him once more.

"It looks bad fer Musclebound, folks, unless he stops where he is and pitches his tent until the storm blows over," offered Gabe as a solution to temporarily save the situation.

"You're right, Gabe, and I vote in favor of what you said, whatever it was," chimed in Lord Ashcart, pounding the ice box with his fist. "All those in favor of Gabriel's suggestion signify in the usual manner."

"YES, WE HAVE NO BANANAS. WE HAVE NO BAN . . ."

And so the motion was carried unanimously and all were happy. The motion was duly recorded in the log of the Graf Ashcart, and upon a specially engraved order from the Committee on Such Things, Gabriel Horn was delegated to pass on the instructions to Professor Musclebound.

"Oh, you Professor," sang out Mr. Horn, without looking where he was walking.

"Oh, you Gabe," sang back the hero of the afternoon's joust.

Then Gabe got serious and passed on to the Professor the news about the approaching storm. Well, it didn't take Musclebound long to pitch his tent, and considering that the only thing between him and the bottom of the Grand Canyon was a rope, one inch and a half in diameter, he certainly showed that he was made of the right mettle. In just a few moments, the Dear Little Nit Wits from their vantage point in the Graf Ashcart, could see a little thin curl of smoke rising from Musclebound's tent and they knew that all was well with him. Probably warming up a can of beans or succotash, they conjectured.

But now to return to the Graf Ashcart. As soon as the Dear Little Nit Wits saw that the Professor was settled down to weather the storm, they turned their attention to their own pleasures.

"Could I persuade the ladies and gentlemen present to indulge in a rubber of bridge," inquired Liz Twitch, winking her eye slyly at the Chinese Chef of the Graf Ashcart, who had just informed Ashcart that the chocolate eclairs had turned sour again.

"A rubber of bridge?" humphed Patience Bumpstead. "I think that's stretching things a little too far at a time like this."

"No, I guess it's all right, Patience. Musclebound is all comfy over there in his tent and as soon as the storm blows over we'll continue," said good old Gabriel, putting a white collar on a blue shirt.

"That's what I said," interjected Patience, willing to let the matter drop.

So, after pulling down the shades, out came the cards and for an hour everything was forgotten but bridge. Even Professor R. U. Musclebound was not mentioned for the next sixty minutes, when finally Gabriel, anxious to once more hear himself talk (just like most radio announcers) raised one of the shades and started to chuckle. Now, when Gabriel Horn starts to chuckle, you might know that something out of the ordinary has happened. And this was no exception.

"Well, I'll be hornswoggled," said Gabriel between bursts of laughter.

"And what's so funny, Gabriel, that you have to bust buttons off'n your vest every time you giggle?" was Mocha de Polka's way of snapping on the hand cuffs.

"Gosh a-mighty. The storm has gone and so has Musclebound," continued Gabe, catching his breath for the third time in ten minutes. "Can you imagine what Musclebound must have thought when that wind picked him off the rope and shot him down into the Canyon?"

Well, sir, the Dear Little Nit Wits couldn't contain their laughter any longer and they laughed and they howled and they roared. My, my, the Professor never would have imagined that he could have been the subject of such merriment on the part of the Dear Little Nit Wits. But then, there is another side to this story. It is a fact that the storm blew the Professor off the rope, tent, stove and all. The Professor, realizing that he was perhaps the first man

to ever be blown off a rope stretched across the Grand Canyon, exercised great presence of mind in taking with him on his descent a tablet of paper and his fountain pen, and from the first foot made notes on his sensations. That is, made notes about his sensations. A man couldn't be expected to make notes on his sensation, unless it was tuned like a guitar.

Well, to make a long story just a little longer, after Musclebound had dropped about two miles, he was caught by an eagle flying in the opposite direction. The eagle didn't seem to notice that he acquired extra tonnage for quite some time, but Musclebound, that clever fellow, was thinking every moment. Now, the Professor had never associated much with the Eagles, but he did once pay dues in the Elks, and had been black-balled by the Moose, and he knew that the rattle of a pair of dice was a sort of universal language among lodgers, as well as some boarders. So, quick as a flash out came his pair of dice and he rolled the eagle to see whether he would travel the bird's way, or whether the bird would travel his way. On the first roll the Professor, using a half nelson, turned up a four-three and without another word passing between them, the eagle landed Musclebound safely in Madison Square Garden, just in time to see Reggie McNamara crowned checker champion of the Atlantic Squadron.

* * * * *

(And now, Marc, I'll trouble you again for that asp. I've been a fool to spend all this time turning the pages of this

outlandish and impossible book, and I can never look my family in the face again. Good bye, Marc, and take my advice and don't forget to read "The Dear Little Nit Wits," and then you can die happy just as I'm doing.)

* * * * *

L'ENVOI

That's all there is. There isn't any sense to it at all. If you've read this far you've done better than I thought. And, in the words of the poet may we say:

Breathes there a man with soul so dead,
Who never to himself hath said:

"YES, WE HAVE NO BANANAS."